How We Are Sanctified by the Sacraments

by Father John E Pichler

The Sacraments and Their Effects

Our own strength is not sufficient to enable us to persevere on the road to Heaven. We have constant need of God's grace, of which, as we have already noted, there are two kinds. For, in order to be able to enter into eternal life we must possess a higher, supernatural, spiritual life even here on earth, that is, sanctifying grace; and we cannot observe the Commandments in a way pleasing to God unless He helps us with His actual grace. Now, what are the means by which we can obtain grace? This will be the subject of the third and fourth parts of this book.

1. Divine grace is invisible. Yet at certain times God desires to impart it to us in a visible manner, in order that we may be more clearly conscious of it. In Baptism, for example, the soul is cleansed from all sins. With this cleansing of the soul God has combined an ablution of the body with water and certain words spoken while the act of washing is performed. The ablution and the words spoken indicate that the soul is cleansed, and they actually effect the cleansing and sanctifying. Such outward signs, which bring us the grace of God, are called Sacraments (that is, holy and mysterious things). Almighty God alone can give to outward signs the power to convey inward grace. Therefore all the Sacraments were instituted by God, i.e., by Jesus Christ.

Because we have need of special graces in the various situations of life, Jesus Christ instituted not one, but seven Sacraments.

The Seven Sacraments are: (1) Baptism; (2) Confirmation; (3) the Holy Eucharist, (4) Penance; (5) Extreme Unction; (6) Holy Orders; (7) Matrimony.

2. The Sacraments are the holiest things and the choicest blessing we have on earth. They procure for us the greatest wealth and happiness, namely, grace, the love and help of God, peace of mind, and eternal salvation. Through the Sacraments we obtain both kinds of grace in the highest degree. Sanctifying grace is imparted to us, or if we already possess it, it is increased within us, and actual graces are bestowed upon us. All the blessings that Jesus Christ has

merited for us through His death on the Cross are imparted to us through the Sacraments. Hence we cannot prize them too highly nor thank God for them too fervently.

3. But we do not obtain help from the Sacraments unless we receive them worthily. A certain preparation is necessary for this. Those that do not possess sanctifying grace, need Baptism only, or if they are already baptized, the Sacrament of Penance. The preparation for these Sacraments - with the exception of Baptism for infants - consists chiefly in sincere sorrow for one's sins and an earnest resolution to amend one's life. The other five Sacraments (namely Confirmation, the Holy Eucharist, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, and Matrimony) may only be received by persons already in the state of sanctifying grace. Therefore the most important preparation for these Sacraments consists in being in the state of sanctifying grace. Whoever receives the Sacraments without this necessary preparation, receives them unworthily and commits a grievous sacrilege.

4. Some Sacraments impress an indelible mark on the soul and raise it to a new state for all time. Thus Baptism makes us Christians for ever, Confirmation makes us soldiers of Christ for ever, the Sacrament of Holy Orders makes those who receive it priests for ever. He who has worthily received one of these Sacraments will receive throughout life the special graces necessary for a Christian, a soldier of Christ, or a priest. Therefore it would be useless to receive one of these Sacraments more than once. To attempt to do so, would be invalid and a grievous sin. The remaining Sacraments can be received repeatedly under certain conditions. The Sacrament of Penance and the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist may be received again and again, and it is the earnest wish of the Church that we should receive them frequently.

What is a Sacrament?

A Sacrament is an outward sign instituted by Christ to give us grace.

The Effects of Baptism

1. When we are baptized, we share in the Redemption which Jesus Christ has brought us. After He had completed the work of the Redemption, He commanded His Apostles and their successors to "go forth and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," assuring men that "he that believeth shall be saved." (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16)

2. The Catholic Church explains this commission. She teaches that Baptism consists in pouring water on the head of the person to be baptized (no other fluid may be used except water in its natural state), that the water must be sprinkled on the skin, and not merely on the hair, and must flow over the skin. While the water is being poured, - not before or afterwards, - the minister of the Sacrament must utter the words: *"I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."*

3. By order of Jesus Christ the pouring of water on the head of the person to be baptized with the words pronounced has the following effects: The Holy Ghost enters the soul of the person baptized, fills it with sanctifying grace, purifies it from all sin, and makes it a glorious image of God. God the Father adopts the baptized person as His child and makes him an heir of Heaven. Therefore Saint Paul announces to those baptized: "You are washed, you are sanctified, you are justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11). He that is baptized is a Christian for ever, that is, he belongs for ever to Christ. Even though he would fall away from the Christian religion, it is indelibly inscribed on his soul that he belongs to Christ. Moreover he belongs to the great family of Christ, the Catholic Church, and has a claim to her blessings, especially to the Sacraments. But no one who is not baptized can receive any of the other Sacraments.

God will always help those who are baptized to lead a Christian life.

At Baptism such a profound change takes place in the human soul that the baptized person is, as it were, reborn; he is born again as a child of God.

Let us be duly grateful for these priceless graces.

4. Baptism is absolutely necessary for salvation. We can deduce this proposition from the words of Christ: "He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved." According to these words, two things are necessary for salvation in the case of an adult: faith, - not a dead faith, but a living faith according to which his whole life is ordered, - and Baptism. But even little children cannot be saved without Baptism, for Jesus said to Nicodemus: "**Amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God**" (John 3:5). The reason is that we have inherited original sin from our First Parents and hence "were by nature children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3).

Infants who die without Baptism will not have to suffer in the next life, because they have 'not committed any sin. It is probable that they will enjoy a certain degree of happiness; but they will be for ever excluded from Heaven. Therefore, Christian parents whom God has blessed with children should take great care that their children do not die unbaptized. It is the desire of the Church that Baptism should not be postponed longer than two days after birth.

5. Because Baptism is so necessary, any person can give it. But lay-persons (that is, those who are not in Holy Orders) may administer Baptism only in case of necessity, that is, when there is danger that the child will die without being baptized. If possible, one or two witnesses should be present during the administration of Baptism in case of necessity. Even though a child has been baptized by a lay-person, he must, if he survives, be afterwards brought to a priest. The priest says the prescribed prayers over the child and, should there be any doubt concerning the validity of the Baptism, he will rebaptize the child conditionally.

6. If any person cannot receive Baptism, yet loves God, is sorry for his sins, and has the intention to do everything that God requires of him, and if he dies in this disposition, his desire will be accepted in the place of Baptism; he receives the Baptism of desire. For Jesus has said: "If anyone love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him" (John 14:23). It is probable that many pagans are saved through the Baptism of desire.

Those too will be saved who, though not yet baptized, repent of their sins and lay down their lives for Jesus Christ; they receive the "Baptism of blood." For Jesus has said: "He that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it" (Matthew 10:39).

How is baptism given?

Baptism is given by pouring water on the head of the person to be baptized and at the same time pronouncing the words: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

What is the effect of Baptism on the soul?

Baptism confers sanctifying grace and frees the soul from all sin; it makes us Christians and members of the Catholic Church.

Who may baptize validly?

Any person can baptize validly; but a lay person should not baptize except in case of necessity.

The Baptism of Jesus and Our Baptism

Before Jesus began His public life, God sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for Him. John preached by the River Jordan and exhorted those who came in large numbers to hear him, to do penance. Many confessed their sins and were baptized by John, thus expressing their desire to be washed and cleansed from sin. That is why John was called "the Baptist." But he expressly told them that the Baptism he gave them could not really efface their sins, but that the Redeemer would bring them the true Baptism.

One day Jesus came to the Jordan and asked John to baptize Him. John, filled with reverence and awe, said: "I ought to be baptized by thee, and comest thou to me?" But Jesus answered: "Suffer it to be so now." Then John obeyed. Jesus entered the river, and John poured water on His head.

When Jesus had been baptized, He came out of the river and prayed. Then Heaven opened, the Holy Ghost descended and came

upon Him in the form of a dove, and a voice from Heaven cried: "This is my well-beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

This was a symbol of what happens to the soul at Baptism. Heaven also opened when we were baptized; the Holy Ghost descended into our souls and brought us sanctifying grace by which original sin was effaced (when adults are baptized, their personal sins, too, are effaced), and our souls became glorious and radiant in the eyes of God. But the Holy Ghost did not come to us for a moment only; He made our bodies His temple and remained in us. When God the Father saw our souls purified and radiant with His image, He cried out from Heaven: This is my well-beloved child, in whom I am well pleased. Because we were now children of God, Heaven was open to us, we received a claim to eternal beatitude and became heirs of the celestial Kingdom. If we had died soon after Baptism, our souls would immediately have entered Heaven.

What God has given us in Baptism is a thousand times more precious than all the riches of this world. Let us often thank Him for this, especially on the anniversary of our Baptism.

How Solemn Baptism Is Conferred

The Church has surrounded Baptism with certain prayers and ceremonies calculated to show us how great and holy this Sacrament is. So also with the other Sacraments.

1. The person to be baptized is attended by a godfather or a godmother, or by both. These (the so-called sponsors) undertake to answer to the Catholic Church for the conduct of him who is baptized; they also assume the duty of seeing to it that he is brought up in the Christian religion. Therefore the sponsors should themselves be good practical Catholics. Non-Catholics cannot act as sponsors. The godparents contract a spiritual relationship with the godchild. The child should also have a guardian and intercessor in Heaven, whom he can keep before him as a model, and should, therefore, be given the name of a saint.

2. As a rule Baptism is conferred in church. But the first prayers and ceremonies take place in an anteroom of the church, showing that the person to be baptized does not yet belong to the Kingdom of God. As a sign that the evil spirit shall depart from the infant, the priest breathes three times in his face, and because he henceforth belongs to Jesus, the priest makes the sign of the cross on his forehead and breast. He then places blessed salt in his mouth. This indicates that the person baptized shall be protected from the corruption of sin and shall have a taste of the things of Heaven. Then in the name of the Three Divine Persons, the priest solemnly commands Satan to quit the baptizandus, and as a sign that the Church takes him under her protection, he first lays his hand on the child, then the end of the stole, the vestment of his office, and conducts him into the church.

3. In the church, generally beside the baptismal font, the priest touches the ear and the nose of the infant, saying at the same time: "Ephphata," that is, "Be opened to the sweet perfume!" The ear shall be opened to the Word of God, which shall be to him as a divine perfume, to be joyfully inhaled. Then in the name of the infant the godparents renounce the devil and all his works and pomps. The infant renounces the pomps of the devil, that is, he promises not to

become blinded by fame, riches or pomps, and not to become alienated from God. Then the priest anoints him with the baptismal oil on the breast, to fortify him in his struggles against the devil, and between the shoulders, to fortify him in bearing his cross after Christ. The baptismal oil is blessed by the bishop every year on Holy Thursday. The godparents, in the child's name, make a profession of faith in the Three Divine Persons and in the Catholic Church.

4. Then the priest gives the infant a name chosen by the parents and godparents, saying: "N , I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." While uttering these words, he pours the baptismal water three times on the head in the form of a cross. (It is sufficient for the validity of Baptism to pour the water on the head once, and the form of a cross is not necessary.)

5. After Baptism the priest anoints the infant on the crown of the head with chrism, as a sign of the high dignity that has been conferred on him. The priest also spreads a white robe over the infant and exhorts him to bring the white robe of his soul unstained before the judgment-seat of Christ. He hands the infant (the godfather) a lighted taper, a symbol of the torch of charity and zeal in good works, which he is to keep alight in his heart. Thus he shall keep himself constantly prepared for the moment when the Saviour will come to lead him to the divine marriage feast.

Finally the name of the child and his parents' names are entered in the baptismal register.

In holy Baptism a covenant of grace was made by us with God. The vow made by our godparents on our behalf is as binding as if we had pronounced it with our own lips. Even if no promise had been made, it would still be binding on us. We should often renew our baptismal vows, especially on our birthday and the anniversary of Baptism.

What is the duty the sponsors assume?

The sponsors assume the duty of seeing to it that their godchild is brought up in the Catholic religion.

Renewal of the Baptismal Vows

O great, all-holy God! With joy and gladness, and of my own free will, I renew the promise my godparents once made for me at holy Baptism. I renounce the devil and all his works and pomps. I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, who was born and suffered for us. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy Catholic Church, forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. With God's grace I will live and die in this holy Catholic faith. Amen.

The Wedding Garment

The white robe given to the infant at Baptism is to remind us of the parable of the king who gave a feast to celebrate the marriage of his son. He sent his servants to invite numerous guests. According to an Eastern custom, a festive robe was given to each guest as he entered the hall. Now when the hall was filled, the king came to observe the guests. He saw one that had no wedding garment and said to him: "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment?" The guest was silent. Then the king said to his servants: "Bind his hands and his feet, and cast him into exterior darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 22:2 sqq.)

By the wedding feast is to be understood the eternal beatitude of Heaven. The wedding garment is sanctifying grace, given us by God at Baptism. If the Great King finds any person without a wedding garment at the judgment, he will order that person to be cast into hell, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Therefore the priest exhorts the *baptizandus*: "Receive this white garment and bring it unstained before the judgment-seat of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that thou mayest have everlasting life."

Do you still possess this celestial wedding garment?

The Sacrament of Penance and Its Effects

1. One of the greatest gifts which the Saviour has bestowed on us is the Sacrament of Penance. Jesus instituted this Sacrament when He was with His Apostles after the Resurrection and said to them: "**Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained**" (John 20:22-23).

This command was intended not only for the Apostles, but also for their successors, the bishops and priests of the Catholic Church.

2. Therefore the priest, acting in God's place, can forgive sins. But he may not forgive all sins; in the case of some he must "retain" them. He may forgive the sins only when the penitent is truly converted, that is, repents of his sins and is resolved to apply all the means necessary to correct his faults, and also to make restitution for the wrong he has done. The priest can judge whether the penitent is truly reconciled to God only if the penitent reveals his inner self to him, that is, if he confesses at least his mortal sins. In order to be able to do this in the right way, the penitent must first examine his conscience.

3. When the penitent has confessed his sins, the priest, if he considers him worthy, will give him absolution. If he is truly repentent, God Himself, through the mouth of the priest, absolves him.

Through the priestly absolution, God forgives the penitent all the mortal sins he has committed, even those which, through no fault of his, he has forgotten to confess; and also as many of the venial sins as the penitent repents and confesses. The eternal punishment, that is, the punishment of eternal damnation, is entirely remitted by God through the absolution. The temporal punishment of sin, that is, the punishment which lasts only for a time, and which must be expiated either in this life or in Purgatory, is at least partially remitted. Further, through the absolution, God again bestows or increases sanctifying grace and imparts actual grace to help the penitent to lead a holy life.

4. After receiving absolution the penitent has to perform the penance imposed on him by the priest.

The forgiveness of sins by the priest, together with all that the penitent must do to obtain it, is called the Sacrament of Penance.

In order to be able to examine our conscience well, to have sorrow for our sins, to confess them, and to correct our faults, we should, therefore, begin by asking the help of the Holy Ghost. We can do this in the following words:

"O Holy Ghost, come to my aid, that I may know my sins, be truly sorry for them, confess them and amend my life."

As often as we receive the Sacrament of Penance, we cleanse our souls in the Blood of Jesus Christ and are saved from eternal damnation. God bestows upon us a happiness and peace which the world cannot give.

What does God forgive us and what does He impart to us in confession?

In confession God forgives us our sins and the punishment due to them; He imparts to us sanctifying grace and assists us to lead a holy life.

What must we do before confession?

Before confession we must examine our conscience and excite ourselves to contrition and a firm purpose of amendment.

How the penitent should become reconciled to God and how merciful God is to the contrite sinner, is shown in the

Parable of the Prodigal Son

One day Jesus said to his disciples: "A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father: Father, give me the portion of substance that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his substance. And not many days after, the younger son, gathering all together, went abroad into a far country: and there wasted his substance, living riotously. And after he had spent all, there came a

mighty famine in that country; and he began to be in want. And he went and cleaved to one of the citizens of that country. And he sent him into his farm to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him. And returning to himself, he said: How many hired servants in my father's house abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger? I will arise, and will go to my father, and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee: I am not worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And rising up he came to his father. And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion and running to him, fell upon his neck, and kissed him. And the son said to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, I am not now worthy to be called thy son. And the father said to his servants: Bring forth quickly the first robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and make merry: because this my son was dead, and is come to life again: was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry" (Luke 15:11-24).

Examination of Conscience

Before we receive the Sacrament of Penance, we must first of all call upon the Holy Ghost for help and examine our conscience.

1. In examining our conscience a definite order should be observed.

First we should review our last confession, when we made it, and whether it was valid. It was invalid if we had no contrition for our sins or did not form an earnest resolution to amend our life, or if we did not examine our conscience properly, and consequently overlooked a mortal sin, or if we intentionally concealed a mortal sin. If our last confession was invalid, we must examine our conscience with regard to the time that has elapsed since our last valid confession. We should also reflect whether, in making our last confession, we unintentionally forgot any sin and whether we neglected to perform our penance after confession.

We should then consider the Commandments of God and of the Church and examine ourselves in regard to each in turn, whether we have sinned against any of them. We should also examine ourselves with regard to each of the seven capital sins. In examining our conscience, we can make use of the examination table given in any good prayerbook or of what has been said in Part II of this work regarding the commandments and the capital sins.

We should next consider how we have performed the special duties of our station in life, as father or mother, husband or wife, teacher or pupil, master or employee, etc.

Finally each one should examine himself with regard to his predominant fault, that is, the fault he most often commits, and which is the cause of most of his sins. It is generally one of the seven capital sins. The sins we call to mind while examining our conscience should be carefully remembered and confessed in the same order in which we have examined our conscience.

2. In examining our conscience we must pay most attention to *mortal sins*; for we are obliged to confess all mortal sins. If we find

we are guilty of mortal sins, we should ask ourselves, how often we have commited them, and whether there were any circumstances connected with them which would alter or increase their guilt, such as, for example, in case of theft, the value of the stolen goods. Another important matter in the case of a mortal sin is whether we have committed it in company with others, because we should then share the guilt of the others.

3. The examination of conscience preceding confession is a serious and important matter and sufficient time and care should be devoted to it. We should prolong the examination until we can say to ourselves that we have reasonably thought of all our sins, and that no mortal sin has escaped our memory. If we examine our conscience superficially and thereby expose ourselves to the danger of overlooking a mortal sin, our confession may be invalid.

4. It is a good practice to make a brief examination of conscience every evening with regard to how we have spent the day. Only in this way do we learn to know ourselves and get rid of our faults and make progress in virtue. By such a daily examen, the examination of conscience required for confession is made easier.

What does it mean to examine the conscience?

To examine the conscience means to consider earnestly what sins we have committed.

In what order should we examine our conscience?

We should examine our conscience in the following order: our last confession; the commandments of God; the commandments of the Church; the capital sins; the duties of our station in life; our predominant passion.

To what should we particularly attend when examining our conscience?

In examining our conscience we should attend particularly to mortal sins, the number of times we have committed a mortal sin, and the circumstances that may change its nature.

The Particular Examination of Conscience

Saint Ignatius Loyola in his "Spiritual Exercises" advises us to make, besides the general examination of conscience, a particular examination with regard to some one fault or imperfection of which we especially desire to free ourselves. For this purpose we should provide ourselves with a notebook and divide each page into seven parts, for the seven days of the week. We should note down each day the number of times we have committed the particular fault in question. In this way we can see what progress we make from day to day and from week to week.

Among the many who have followed this advice of Saint Ignatius was Cardinal Francis Schönborn, Prince-Archbishop of Prague, who died of pneumonia on a confirmation trip to Falkenau, June 24th, 1899. After his death a notebook, such as described above, was found in his house, and the final entry in it had been made on the 21st of June, the day on which the Cardinal became ill.

King George of Saxony used also to make a "special examination of conscience" in the way described. After his death it was found that he had made a mark in his notebook on the very day he died, the 15th of October, 1904.

Contrition

The most necessary part of the Sacrament of Penance is contrition, for without contrition no sin can be forgiven.

1. In the Old Testament, God announced through the Prophet Ezechiel: "As I live . . . I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live" (Ezekiel 33:11). God does not desire the damnation of the wicked; He wants to pardon the sinner, and to give him back the life of grace he has lost. But the sinner must first be converted, that is, he must turn away from his sins and return to God. We turn away from our sins when we hate and abhor them, when we sincerely wish we had not committed them, when we are truly sorry for them. This is contrition. In the parable of the Prodigal Son Jesus teaches us that we must have sincere contrition for our sins. The Prodigal Son was genuinely sorry that he had left his father.

Therefore the Church, at the Council of Trent, defined that contrition has always been necessary before sins could be forgiven, and that it consists in an affliction of the soul and a detestation of sin.

Unaided reason tells us that the infinitely holy God cannot bestow His grace on a man who has turned his back on Him and persists in remaining away from Him.

2. Contrition must have certain qualities. It is not enough simply to repeat a verbal formula. We must be sorry for our sins in heart and will. We may, of course, make use of a definite formula, but we must take care that the words really express our heart-felt sentiments.

We must have contrition at least for all the mortal sins we have committed. As long as the heart clings to even one mortal sin, we are not truly converted and cannot receive pardon.

Our contrition must be coupled with the firm resolution to die rather than be unfaithful to God again; else there is no genuine

conversion.

If a drunkard repents of his passion for drink because it has deprived him of his property, honour and health, this does not mean that he is converted to God. He must have higher, supernatural motives for contrition; above all, he must be sorry for his sins because he has offended God.

If we return to God as contritely as the Prodigal Son returned to his father, God will receive us with open arms. Holy Scripture says: "A contrite and humbled heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 50:19).

When have we contrition for our sins?

We have contrition for our sins when we are truly sorry for having offended God.

For how many sins must we be sorry?

We must be sorry for at least all the mortal sins we have committed.

The Contrition of Peter

When Jesus stood before the judges who condemned Him to death, the Apostle Peter remained in the fore-court with the servants, waiting to hear the fate of His Master. He thought no one knew him, but they recognized him and said: "Thou also wast with Jesus. . . . Thou also art one of them!" Peter was frightened and said: "No, I know not the man!" Thus he denied the Saviour three times, although Jesus had said: "He that shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:33). Peter even swore that he did not know Jesus. Then the door of the hall opened, and Jesus was led forth. He looked at Peter sorrowfully, and Peter saw that he had grieved His Master deeply. He went out and wept bitterly.

Because Peter had such a deep contrition for his sin, Jesus granted him complete forgiveness and appeared to him after His Resurrection, before He appeared to any of the other Apostles. He

also made him the head of His Church. But Peter was never again unfaithful to the Saviour. He preached as Jesus had commanded him to do and guided the Church, even though he was ridiculed and persecuted by Jews and pagans; nay, scourged, imprisoned, and threatened with death. In the end he was crucified for Christ's sake, asking only to be crucified with his head down because he was not worthy to die the same way as his Saviour.

How to Excite Ourselves to True Contrition

The absolution pronounced by the priest is valid only if we lave genuine contrition in our hearts at the moment it is given. Therefore we must excite ourselves to contrition before we enter he confessional.

In order to awaken sincere contrition in our hearts, we need above all the assistance of the Holy Ghost. We should ask earnestly for this favour saying: "O Holy Ghost, help me to lave true contrition!"

Then let us meditate on one or the other articles of faith which is apt to move us to sorrow for our sins. The following are he most important motives for contrition:

1. God is infinitely great. The whole world belongs to Him, or He has created it. The earth obeys Him; the millions and millions of stars in the heavens pursue the courses He has traced for them. But I, a miserable creature, have dared to say to God: I will not serve! I will do as I please! Will God permit this? He is infinitely holy and hates evil. He is infinitely just and punishes sin severely. Every sinner who dies in the state of mortal sin will be cast into hell. How easily God could have let me die in my sins! And then I should be in hell for all eternity. If I have no mortal sin on my soul, I should at least have to suffer the pains of Purgatory. My God, what have I done? I thank Thee that Thou hast not cast me away. Pardon me for having sinned against Thee. I am sincerely sorry and will never offend thee again.

2. I have stained my soul by sin. If I have committed a mortal sin, I have lost sanctifying grace. When I was in the state of grace, my soul was glorious; now it has become more hideous than a rotting corpse. I was an heir of Heaven, and the angels and saints were my brothers and sisters. Now I am an outcast from Heaven, from the family of God. O Father in Heaven! I have squandered the precious inheritance Thou gavest me; I have lost Thy grace and forfeited eternal happiness. Oh, I am very, very sorry! Have mercy on me! Give me back Thy grace and receive me as Thy child once more!

If we repent of our sins from such motives as these, our sorrow is caused chiefly by the fear of God. This is a good motive, though imperfect.

3. Our contrition is perfect if we are sorry for our sins for the love of God.

The following are motives by which we can excite ourselves to perfect contrition:

God is infinitely kind to me. He has bestowed innumerable benefits on me. He has given me my body and my soul, and sustains my life every moment. He thinks of me and cares for me continually. In Baptism He received me as His child. His pardoned me often in confession and He nourished my soul with the Body and Blood of His Son! He wishes to give Himself to me entirely and forever in Heaven. He says to me: "I love them with an eternal love" (Jeremiah 31:3). Yet I have been indifferent towards Him! Nay, I have despised Him! Perhaps I have preferred some evil person or a low desire to God. Our Father in Heaven, I have given Thee indifference in return for Thy love. I deeply regret my ingratitude. Forgive me! Henceforth I will be Thy grateful child.

4. A particularly effective way to elicit perfect contrition is by contemplating our Divine Saviour on the Cross.

Jesus, my God and Saviour, hangs on the Cross in indescribable agony. He looks at me gently and says: "My child, I have suffered for thee. Dost thou believe that I love thee? What has thou done? Thou knewest that I suffered for thy sins, and yet thou didst continue to sin! Thou hast despised my suffering and trampled the Blood I shed for thee under thy feet! Have I deserved such base ingratitude from thee?"

O Jesus, forgive me my sins! From the depth of my heart I am sorry for them. Henceforth I want to love Thee, and nothing shall ever separate me from Thee again. I will die rather than be unfaithful to Thee.

5. After we have considered one or more of these motives, let us pray:

"O God, Thou hatest sin and dost punish it with severity. I have sinned so often! Thou art full of love for me. Thou didst die for me on the cross! Yet I have offended Thee so often and grievously! I am profoundly sorry and firmly resolved never to sin again. I will also avoid the occasions of sin. Merciful Father, forgive me!"

Mary Magdalen's Contrition

Mary Magdalen, a wealthy Jewish woman who lived in the time of Jesus, was a great sinner. Her sins were public and through them she had lost her good reputation. One day she heard Jesus preach and learned from Him what a kind, merciful father God is. She was deeply pained because she had not hitherto loved the Father in Heaven, nay, had even despised Him and trampled His commandments under foot. She saw from the majestic bearing of Jesus, His manner of speech, and His miracles, that He was God. She firmly believed in His divinity. In Jesus she saw before her eyes the infinite goodness of God. It grieved her the more that until now she had requited this kindness by ingratitude. She resolved to begin a new life and thenceforth to serve God with all her strength. She was eager to give expression to her love of God and her deep contrition, and one day, when Jesus was being entertained by a Pharisee, Mary Magdalen entered the hall quite unexpectedly. Taking no notice of the indignant looks of the Pharisee, she went up to Jesus, prostrated herself before Him, and burst into tears. Her tears fell on the feet of the Saviour, and she humbly dried them with her hair, kissed them, and anointed them with a precious ointment, which she had brought in an alabaster vase. Jesus permitted her to do this, and when the Pharisees protested, He said: "Many sins will be forgiven her because she hath loved much." Turning to Mary, He said: "Thy sins are forgiven thee. Thy faith hath made thee whole. Go in peace." Mary Magdalen went away overjoyed. Her conversion was complete. Henceforth her only thought was to do penance for her sins and to please God. She became one of the greatest saints.

From the words of Jesus we can see that Mary Magdalen's sorrow for her sins was dictated by her love of God, and how pleasing to God it was. Let us also have deep sorrow for our sins. Then Jesus

will say also to us: "Thy sins are forgiven thee."

The Value of Perfect Contrition - The Purpose of Amendment

1. If we have an imperfect contrition (attrition) for our sins, that is, if we are sorry for them out of fear of God, and confess them in that state of mind, God will forgive us our sins at the moment the priest pronounces the absolution. But if our contrition is perfect, that is, if we are sorry for the love of God, then God will forgive us our sins at once and without confession. For He has told us He loves those who love Him, and that He will make His abode with them (Proverbs 8:17; John 14:23). But we must nevertheless confess whatever sins we may have committed, for Jesus has commanded that we should go to the priest for absolution. Whoever will not observe this precept has no true love and no genuine contrition in his heart, and will not obtain forgiveness.

2. Anyone who is in the state of mortal sin and in danger of death can, if there is no priest to hear his confession, be saved from eternal damnation by making an act of perfect contrition. When in danger of death, we should excite ourselves to perfect contrition, even if we think we are free from mortal sin; for we can never be sure about this. It may be that we shall die so quickly and unexpectedly that we cannot excite ourselves to sorrow for our sins immediately before death, and hence we should make an act of perfect contrition at once if we have had the misfortune to commit a mortal sin. It is advisable to make an act of perfect contrition every evening. In this way we can save ourselves from hell in case of unexpected death. Perfect contrition is the most important part of our night prayers.

3. A firm *purpose of amendment* must necessarily be joined to our contrition. When we are truly sorry for our sins, we quite naturally form the resolution never to sin again. We must firmly resolve never again, under any conditions, to commit a mortal sin, and in particular, to fight against our predominant passion. We must also be determined to use all the means necessary for amendment. One means that is necessary for all is *fervent prayer*, especially in temptation. For those who habitually commit mortal sin, a

necessary means of amendment is frequent confession and communion. It is furthermore necessary to avoid the immediate occasions of mortal sin, i.e., persons, places, pleasures, books, etc., which are likely to lead us to sin. We must also resolve to make restitution for any injury we may have done to the property, reputation, or salvation of others.

If we have no firm purpose of amendment, we are wanting also in contrition and can not obtain pardon for our sins. But if we are firmly resolved to amend our lives, our contrition is real. A clear sign that we have formed an earnest resolution is the actual amendment of our lives after confession.

What do we receive when we have perfect contrition?

When we have perfect contrition, we receive immediate pardon for our sins, provided: that we have the will to confess our mortal sins.

What is meant by a firm purpose of amendment?

A firm purpose of amendment means to be earnestly resolved (1) to amend our lives and never again at any price to commit a mortal sin; (2) to employ the necessary means of amendment, especially by avoiding the proximate occasions of sin; (3) to make restitution for any injury we may have done to our neighbour.

The Penitent Thief

Even on the cross Jesus Christ showed how merciful God is to the repentant sinner. Two criminals were crucified with Him. One in his last hours repented of his life of sin and with humility and confidence turned to Jesus saying: "Lord, remember me when thou shalt come into thy kingdom." And Jesus answered: "Amen I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:39,43).

Perfect Contrition in the World War

Never perhaps have men excited themselves to perfect contrition so often as in the World War.

In a sense the first victim of the World War was the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, Archduke Francis Ferdinand, who was murdered June 28, 1914. This noble man used to say a fervent prayer every evening with his family. This prayer consisted of three parts, - perfect contrition for all the sins of their past lives, pardon for God's sake of all enemies, and a declaration of readiness to die when, where, and how it might please God. A few days before his death, on the feast of the Sacred Heart, June 19th, Francis Ferdinand received Holy Communion together with his family.

The soldiers at the various fronts were frequently in danger of death and many had no opportunity of going to confession for quite a long time. On such occasions well instructed Christian soldiers made frequent acts of perfect contrition. An Austrian lieutenant who returned wounded, related the following incident to a priest: "The second battalion of Company 5 of the Bavarian Infantry had with great difficulty climbed a mountain on their way to meet the enemy for the first time. The captain made them halt in a forest and addressed them as follows: 'In a quarter of an hour we shall be in front of the enemy, under a shower of bullets. Get ready!' Every soldier drew from his pocket either a prayerbook or a rosary. There was a solemn silence, while officers and their men 'prepared themselves by an act of perfect contrition.' It was a beautiful and touching sight. They then marched down the mountain and defeated the enemy."

A war chaplain, Father Syring, gives the following account of the spiritual work done by the hospital staff: "There was not an Evangelical minister available. Naturally we helped and comforted our Protestant soldiers. I think I can still hear one of them saying: 'Will you not pray a little for me too?' and another: 'Father, I should like to make an act of contrition; will you not help me?' I prayed with them and tried to help them to elicit perfect contrition so as to render easier their passing to our Father in Heaven."

Way and What We Should Confess

1. In order to obtain forgiveness for our sins we must confess them to a priest duly empowered by the bishop to give us absolution. This is called confession. Jesus Christ instituted confession when He said to His Apostles: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained" (John 20:23). Confession was nothing new to the Apostles and to the Israelites. In the Old Covenant the Jews had to offer sacrifices in atonement for certain sins and at the same time confess to a priest. In the Catholic Church confession has been in use since the time of the Apostles. But it was only in 1215 that the Church decreed that every Catholic should confess his sins at least once a year to a duly appointed priest. This does not mean, as some ignorant people think, that confession was introduced for the first time in the thirteenth century; the decree in question was passed to cure the carelessness that was then prevalent in regard to confession.

In commanding us to confess our sins, Jesus supplies a great need of the human heart. For when we have a heavy burden on our conscience, it is a great relief to speak about it to some one who is well disposed towards us, who has experience, and who will not reveal anything we confide to him. If, in addition, he can remove the burden of sin from our hearts, then the blessing is beyond price. Innumerable souls have been saved from despair by confession; more tears of joy have been shed after confession than on any other occasion. The majority of penitents need instruction from the priest regarding the extent of their guilt and how they can atone for it; they also need the assistance of the priest to gain a better knowledge of themselves, to elicit contrition, and to amend their lives. This instruction and help is made possible through confession.

2. From the confession the priest should know what the conscience of the penitent is like, and whether he can give him absolution or not. Therefore the penitent must confess all that is important, that is, all the mortal sins he has committed, the number of times, and all important circumstances connected with them. It is not enough merely to say we have sinned in thought, word, and deed; the sins must be mentioned by name. We must not palliate the guilt of our

sins, but confess them candidly and clearly. We should tell our sins without waiting for the priest to question us, for often the priest sees no occasion to put questions. Any questions the priest asks should be answered with perfect candour; one lie can make a confession invalid. It is not necessary to confess venial sins; but it is advisable to do so and to state how often we committed them.

Sometimes confession is urgently needed, but it is impossible to make a complete confession, for example, when a person is so ill that he can scarcely think for weakness, or when a large number of soldiers want to go to confession before a battle and there is only one priest available. In such cases the penitent needs only to indicate generally that he has sinned, or if even this is impossible, to signify contrition or his desire for absolution. But the obligation remains to confess all his mortal sins later, if an opportunity should present itself. Even in such an incomplete confession contrition is indispensable.

3. If it appears difficult to us to confess our sins, we should consider that God could ask something much more difficult as a condition of pardoning us. Confession lasts only a few moments, after which we are free from our sins for ever. But anyone who knowingly conceals a mortal sin in the confessional abuses the Sacrament of Penance, commits another mortal sin, and does not receive pardon for his other sins. In such a case the absolution given by the priest is invalid. The sinner's conscience is not at rest. He is in constant danger of dying in his sins and of being lost for all eternity. At the Last Judgment his sins will be revealed to the whole world, to his great shame. Saint Cyprian (died 258) writes: "I beg of you, brethren, let each of you confess your faults as long as you are on this earth, as long as your confession can be accepted, as long as your penance and the absolution given by the priest are still valid before God."

We must not be ashamed to confess our sins. It shows character and an honourable disposition to confess one's sins. Further, the confessor is himself a poor, sinful man and therefore far removed from despising the sinner because of his sins. On the contrary, he esteems him for his sincerity and is happy to relieve him of his burden. The confessor may not under any circumstances reveal

what the penitent has told him, not even to any one in authority, spiritual or secular. He must suffer imprisonment or death rather than betray a penitent. There have been many cases in which priests have borne disgrace, imprisonment or death because they would not reveal what they had heard in the confessional. In the 1900 years of the Church's history there has been scarcely one instance known of a priest consciously betraying a penitent. (*see Kurtscheid-Marks-Preuss, A History of the Seal of Confession, Saint Louis, 1928*)

Any one that conceals a sin in confession only gratifies the devil, who hopes the sinner will perish. But he who makes a sincere confession causes God, his guardian angel, and all Heaven to rejoice, and procures for himself a joy and peace such as the world can never give.

What must we tell in confession?

In confession we must tell at least all our mortal sins, the number of times they have been committed, and any important circumstances.

What are the consequences of willfully concealing a mortal sin in confession?

If a mortal sin is willfully concealed in confession, the confession is invalid, and another mortal sin is committed.

Joy after Confession

Father Andrew Hamerle, C.SS.R., of Vienna, relates how he once met an army officer who was wearing a medal for exceptional courage. He spoke about religion, and Father Hamerle said to the officer: "The medal you are wearing shows that you have faithfully kept your vow to serve your country and have fought bravely. Pardon me for enquiring whether you have kept your first vow - your baptismal vow - with equal fidelity." The officer was embarrassed at this remark. But Father Hamerle said: "What has been neglected can still be done." This did not appeal to the officer, and Father Hamerle continued: "Captain, you have often faced death and have stood firm amid flying bullets. How can you now

fear to do your duty? No, you cannot and may not evade it." For a time the officer struggled with his feelings. Then he said: "Yes, I shall do my duty and I should like to receive the sacraments from you; but not just now." "That is right, Captain," said Father Hamerle, "but why not today? Come along with me." The officer followed him into a room of the monastery, and asked the priest to help him. This the father did, and the captain made his confession simply and sincerely. When he had finished, he knelt down before the priest and, kissing his hand, said: "You are my greatest benefactor." So happy was he after confession. The priest then said: "But now you must receive the Sacraments often." "As often as you wish," was the answer. And he kept his word. He lived a pious life for many years and died in peace.

How to Correct Imperfect Confessions - What to Do During and After Confession

1. Anyone who is conscious of having made an imperfect confession must correct this mistake the next time. He must tell the priest that he made an invalid confession, how often this happened, and whether he received holy Communion while in this state. Further, he must confess all the other mortal sins he has committed since his last valid confession. As long as the invalid confessions have not been made good, all succeeding confessions are invalid, the burden of sins becomes greater and greater, conversion grows more and more difficult, and there is the greatest danger of dying in this state and of being damned forever.

2. A confession in which former confessions are repeated is called a *general confession*. Only those who have made an invalid confession are obliged to make a general confession. But it is useful for everyone to do so from time to time, especially before Confirmation and before changing one's state of life, before marriage, for instance, or at the end of a mission or retreat; finally, on one's death-bed, if possible. At a general confession the conscience should be put thoroughly in order; usually one has greater sorrow for one's sins then, and therefore is more certain of forgiveness. Therefore, as a rule, a general confession brings greater joy; on our death-bed the recollection of the general confessions we have made will be very consoling. Scrupulous persons, however, should make a general confession only when they are sure that they made an invalid confession, or when their confessor advises them to do so.

3. If, in spite of careful preparation, we have forgotten to confess some of our sins, even though they be mortal sins, we need not be troubled, for to forget sins does not make a confession invalid and the forgotten sins are forgiven with the others. In such a case we may go to holy Communion without going to confession again. But at the next confession the forgotten sins, at least the mortal sins, must be told.

4. The following is the exterior form of confession: The penitent

with folded hands kneels down in the confessional. The priest asks God to bless him that he may make a good confession. At the same time he makes the sign of the cross over the penitent; then the latter tells how long it is since his last confession, and says: "**I confess before God that I have committed the following sins.**" (These words are not essential.) Then the penitent confesses his sins in the same order in which he has examined his conscience, and concludes with the words: "**I am heartily sorry for having offended God, and firmly determined to amend my life.**" These concluding words are not necessary either, except when the penitent has neglected to make an act of contrition and a firm purpose of amendment before confession.

If the priest finds that the confession is not sufficiently clear or complete, he will ask the penitent some questions; these should be answered with perfect candour. He will also give the penitent a short instruction; this should be listened to attentively. The penitent may also ask the priest questions concerning his soul. The priest then imposes a proportionate penance and with hands joined prays that God may grant the penitent forgiveness. Meantime the latter may again ask God for pardon. Then the priest raises his right hand and says: "I absolve thee from thy sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." At the same time he makes the sign of the cross over the penitent; the latter should also make the sign of the cross. If the penitent has confessed his sins with sincerity and good-will, the absolution is valid in God's eyes and the Heavenly Father receives the prodigal son or daughter with open arms.

5. The penitent should as soon as possible conscientiously perform the penance imposed upon him and then thank God fervently for having received him back as His child.

The penance is imposed on us in order that we may, at least in some measure, share the severe penance which Jesus performed for us and make some restitution and atonement for the sins we have committed. God exhorts us through the prophet Joel (2:12): "Be converted to me with all your heart, in fasting, and in weeping, and in mourning." And Pope Saint Gregory the Great (died 604) writes: "He that has to admit he has been guilty of unlawful acts, should

take care to abstain from some things that are lawful, in order thus to make amends to his Creator." The penance imposed by the priest is very light. If we did no further penance, it is extremely probable that we should have a great deal to suffer either in this life or in the next (Purgatory). Therefore, let us assume voluntary penances by denying ourselves licit pleasures and performing works of mercy; let us also accept humbly the crosses which God sends us, and bear them patiently as a penance for our sins.

Generally speaking, we may not regard our work as finished when we have received absolution; but must be careful to carry out our good resolutions, live up to the exhortations of the confessor, and do better in future. If we progress in virtue at least one step each time we go to confession, we may be certain that we have made good confessions and are advancing on the way to Heaven.

What must he do who has made an invalid confession?

He who has made an invalid confession must reveal this fact in the confessional and state how often; he must also repeat all the confessions that were invalid.

What must he do who has forgotten a mortal sin in confession?

He who has forgotten a mortal sin in confession must reveal it at his next confession.

What must we do after confession?

After confession we must perform the penance given us and truly amend our lives.

Confession in the World War

In time of war confession is an indescribably great solace to soldiers who have the faith. Many war chaplains have related how fervently the soldiers went to confession, in churches, houses, trenches, at the front, in the open field, in the forest, on snow-covered hills, standing at their posts, travelling by train, on horseback, lying on the field of battle - whenever an opportunity offered. And after confession they were so happy, so calm!

Father Kleinenbroich, O. P., chaplain to a German division in the war, wrote in the Cologne Volkszeitung (November 17th, 1915):

". . . On the field of battle one experiences many touching examples of deep religious fervour. Once thirty-eight soldiers from the Rhineland, having heard that an attack was to be made that evening, quickly signalled to their chaplain the following message: 'Father, can we see you once more before the charge? If yes, you must be here in half an hour.' The soldiers wanted to go to confession before going to the front; their request was of course granted. After the attack ten of them were dead and eighteen badly wounded. Their commander assured me that these Rhinelanders had fought like lions against a superior force."

A Self-Imposed Penance

In the city of Seville, Spain, a fine display is given day and night during the last days of Holy Week. Enormous well-lighted floats are carried about, on which are shown scenes from the Passion of Christ or the life of Our Lady. It requires from twenty to forty men to carry one of these floats; but the men are invisible, being concealed by curtains. Almost all the inhabitants of the city assist at the processions, either as helpers or as spectators. As the processions last from five to ten or twelve hours, this is no small sacrifice for the helpers to make. Often a penitent can be seen in the procession, barefooted and carrying a heavy cross on his shoulders. A few years ago a man who had partaken of too much wine threw a missile at a statue of Our Lady, causing it to fall. When he sobered up, he condemned his deed and repented. Every year since he has marched in the procession laden with chains, accusing himself of his sin, and begging pardon of the Blessed Virgin for having ill-treated her statue.

The Value of Indulgences and How We Can Gain Them

1. In the Sacrament of Penance, when God forgives mortal sins, He also remits the eternal punishment due to them, that is, the punishment of hell. But generally some temporal punishment, that is, punishment lasting only for a time, remains and must be suffered, either in this life or in Purgatory. Now Jesus has empowered His Church to remit temporal punishments also, for He said to the authorities: **"Whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven"** (Matthew 18:18). The Church uses this power and when our sins have been forgiven, remits also the temporal punishment due to them, either wholly or in part. This remission of temporal punishment is called an "indulgence." An indulgence, therefore, is not a remission of sins, but a remission of the temporal punishments due to sin after forgiveness has been granted.

2. When by an indulgence (or pardon) all the temporal punishment that we should have had to suffer is remitted, this indulgence is called plenary; when only part of the punishment is remitted, it is called partial. Partial indulgences are indulgences of forty, fifty, one hundred or more days, or of one or more years. By such an indulgence as much of the punishment is remitted as one would have to undergo if one did penance for forty, fifty, or one hundred days, etc., according to the ancient penitential discipline, which was much severer than the present.

3. To gain an indulgence we must be in the state of sanctifying grace. If we are conscious of unforgiven mortal sin, we must first gain remission of the eternal punishment through the Sacrament of Penance.

In order fully to gain a plenary indulgence we must be free not only from mortal, but also from venial sins.

For the gaining of indulgences the Church prescribes certain good works. For example, by devoutly saying: "All for Thee, most Sacred Heart of Jesus!" we can gain an indulgence of three hundred days;

by making the Sign of the Cross, one hundred days; the same for saying, "Praise be to Jesus Christ," and for the answer, "For all eternity. Amen." An unusually large number of indulgences can be gained by saying the Rosary on beads that have special indulgences attached to them; by joining a confraternity such as that of the Rosary, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, or the Scapular; and by making the Stations of the Cross. To gain a plenary indulgence it is usually necessary to receive the Sacraments. For example, a plenary indulgence can be gained on the Feast of the Sacred Heart by receiving the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist, visiting a church where the feast of the Sacred Heart is kept, and there praying for the intention of the Holy Father. Those of the faithful who are in the habit of going to confession twice a month, or to holy Communion daily, can gain all indulgences without confession. A great many other indulgences will be found mentioned in any good prayerbook.

Most indulgences can be applied to the poor souls in Purgatory by making a special intention to that effect.

Indulgences, or any blessed article, may never be sold. In former times abuses crept in with regard to indulgences, but these abuses were condemned and abolished by the Church.

Let us not neglect to gain indulgences in order to shorten Purgatory for ourselves and others. Let us often ask God to allow us to gain all the indulgences we possibly can. One who is indifferent to, and has no intention of gaining indulgences, will certainly not gain any and will regret his negligence, if not in this world, then in the next.

What is an indulgence?

An indulgence is the pardon or remission of temporary punishments due to sin.

What is necessary in order to gain indulgences?

In order to gain indulgences we must be in the state of sanctifying grace and perform the good works prescribed by the Church.

The Portiuncula Indulgence

"Portiuncula" was the name of a little church particularly dear to Saint Francis of Assisi, which he restored after it had fallen into ruins. (*note: The word "Portiuncula" originally meant a small heirloom and referred to the plot of ground on which the church stands.*) There is a pious legend that Saint Francis in this church obtained from our Divine Saviour the grace of a plenary indulgence to be gained by all who visited this church on the anniversary of its consecration, August 2nd. The popes confirmed and extended this indulgence and it can now be gained in all the churches of the Franciscans, Capuchins, and Franciscan Nuns, as well as in one or more churches designated by the bishop in each locality. Accordingly, on the 2nd of August, all Catholics who receive the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist can gain a plenary indulgence for themselves or for the poor souls in Purgatory as often as they visit one of these churches and pray for the intention of the Holy Father. In many countries, e. g., in the Tyrol, the 2nd of August has become a great feast, on which almost all the people receive the Sacraments and, by gaining the Portiuncula Indulgence repeatedly, bring great relief to the poor souls.

The Blessed Sacrament, Promised by God, Instituted by Jesus Christ

The greatest and most beautiful Sacrament is the Holy Eucharist or Blessed Sacrament, also called Sacrament of the Altar because it is on the altar and administered from the altar.

1. From the earliest times God repeatedly promised men this great Sacrament. He symbolized it by the sacrifice of the royal priest Melchisedech, which consisted of bread and wine, by the Easter lamb, which was slain as a sacrifice and partaken of as a holy meal, and by the manna on which the Israelites lived in the desert. God prophesied through David that the Messias would be "a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech" (Psalm 109:4). In the twenty-first Psalm the Redeemer is represented on the Cross lamenting His suffering and forsaken condition, but afterwards, beholding the happy future, He says: "The poor shall eat and shall be filled: and they shall praise the Lord that seek him: their hearts shall live for ever and ever. All the ends of the earth shall remember, and shall be converted to the Lord: and all the kindreds of the Gentiles shall adore in his sight. For the kingdom is the Lord's; and he shall have dominion over the nations. All the fat ones of the earth have eaten and have adored: all they that go down to the earth [into the grave] shall fall before him" (Psalm 21:27-30). Through the prophet Malachias God foretold that "a clean oblation" would be offered to the Lord "in every place," i.e., throughout the whole world (Malachi 1:11).

2. Jesus Himself spoke of this Sacrament. When He had fed 5,000 men, women, and children with five loaves and two fishes in the desert, He promised that He would give them a yet more wonderful bread, saying: "I am the true bread from heaven" (John 6:32); "if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give, is my flesh for the life of the world" (John 6:52). The Jews became angry and said: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Jesus explained to them: "Amen, amen I say unto you: Except you eat of the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my

blood, hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed: and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him" (John 6:53-57).

3. What Jesus promised on this occasion, He fulfilled on the eve of His Passion, when He ate the Easter lamb with His Apostles at the Last Supper. He took bread and, looking up to Heaven, gave thanks to His Father, blessed the bread, broke it, and gave it to His Apostles, saying: "Take ye, and eat. This is my body." Then He took the chalice with wine, gave thanks, blessed it, and gave it to the Apostles, saying: "Drink ye all of this. For this is my blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins" (Matthew 26:26-27). Astonished and filled with deepest reverence, the Apostles partook of the sacred repast. It bore the forms of bread and wine, but from the words spoken by Jesus they knew it was no longer bread and wine, but had been changed into His precious Body and Blood. Finally Jesus bade them to "do this in commemoration of me" (Luke 22:19).

This was our Divine Saviour's last will and testament. He bequeathed to us His Body and His Blood under the forms of bread and wine. How incomprehensibly great is His love! Let us be duly thankful for this unutterable proof of His affection and goodness!

Tantum ergo sacramentum
Veneremur cernui,
Et antiquum documentum
Novo cedat ritui!
Praestet fides supplementum
Sensuum defectui!

Down in adoration falling,
Lo! the Sacred Host we hail;
See! our ancient forms departing,
Newer rites of grace prevail;
Faith for all defects supplying,
Where the feeble senses fail.

What is the Blessed Sacrament?

The Blessed Sacrament is the true body and blood of Jesus Christ under the appearances of bread and wine.

What were the words Jesus employed in instituting the Blessed Sacrament?

Jesus instituted the Blessed Sacrament with the words: "Take ye and eat! This is my body, which is given for you. Drink ye all of this; this is my blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins. Do this in commemoration of me."

The True Paschal Lamb

About 1500 years before Christ the Jews were languishing in wretched slavery in Egypt. They implored God to come to their aid. Through Moses God commanded the King to permit the Israelites to go into the land of Chanaan which God had promised them. But the King and the people of Egypt refused to let them go. Then God sent a series of terrible plagues upon the land and its inhabitants. But the King remained obdurate. Finally God warned him that unless he gave in, the first-born son in every family would be slain. The Jews were instructed to sacrifice an immaculate lamb on the evening of the 14th day of Nisan and to sprinkle its blood on the door-posts of their houses.

The Israelites did as God had commanded. That same night the first-born son in every Egyptian house died, but the Israelites were protected by the blood of the lamb. There was great lamentation throughout the land, and the Egyptians themselves now urged the Jews to leave. They left and finally reached the promised land after many difficulties and dangers. By divine command they celebrated every year the festival of Easter with great joy and ceremony, in thanksgiving for having been miraculously rescued from the bondage of the Egyptians. At this time a lamb was sacrificed and eaten, as had been done formerly in Egypt.

At the Last Supper Jesus partook of the Easter lamb with His Apostles. But He Himself was the true Paschal Lamb. Hitherto the lamb had been symbolic of our Saviour. Even as the lamb had been sacrificed by God's decree, so Jesus was sent to sacrifice Himself for

men. Therefore He was called the "Lamb of God" by John the Baptist. The Paschal lamb was slain and every house that was sprinkled with its blood was preserved from death. Jesus patiently allowed Himself to be slain like a lamb on the same date, the 14h Nisan; by a special decree of God none of His bones were broken, as were those of the men crucified with Him. Those whose souls have been washed in Baptism by the Blood of Jesus and who faithfully preserve the grace received in Baptism will be preserved from eternal death. The Paschal lamb, after it had been sacrificed, was partaken of as a holy rite. Jesus desires not only to be sacrificed, but to be our Food in Holy Communion. The Israelites had to be prepared for a long journey when they partook of the first Easter lamb; similarly we, when we partake of our Easter Lamb, should be mindful that we are on the journey to Heaven and should detach our hearts from earthly things.

The Jews celebrated Easter in thanksgiving for having been saved. We also do this. But the chief celebration will take place in Heaven, where (Apocalypse 5) we shall fall down before the lamb and sing a new canticle to Him: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God, in thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us to our God a kingdom and priests, and we shall reign on the earth" (Apocalypse 5:9-10). And thousands and thousands of angels will cry out: "The lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and… glory, and benediction," and every creature in Heaven and on the earth and in the sea will be heard saying: "To him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, benediction, and honour, and glory, and power, for ever and ever." (Apocalypse 5:12-13)

Christ's Real Presence in the Sacrament of the Altar

1. Jesus Christ desired to give men the Divine Bread, i.e., Himself, for all time. Therefore He said to the Apostles: "Do this in commemoration of me." With this He gave to them and their successors, i.e., the bishops and priests of the Catholic Church, the command and full power to do at all times what He did at the Last Supper, that is, to change bread and wine into His Body and Blood and to administer this spiritual Food to the faithful. The bishops and priests obey this command when at Holy Mass, in the name of Jesus Christ, they repeat over the bread and wine the same words which He spoke at the Last Supper, and thus change the material elements into His Body and Blood, of which they themselves partake and which they distribute to the faithful.

2. After the Consecration the Body of Jesus Christ is present under the form of bread, the so-called "Host." It is the living Body of Christ and therefore His Blood and His Soul also. After the Consecration the Blood of Jesus Christ is present in the chalice, not apart from the Body, but in the Body, as in case of any living person. Therefore the Body and the Soul of Jesus Christ are present also in the chalice. Our Divine Redeemer is present in the Holy Eucharist not only as man, but also as God; for His two natures are inseparably united. He is corporeally present, but after the manner of a spirit, that is, in such a way His whole being is present in each part of the sacred host and in each drop of the consecrated wine.

After the Consecration Jesus remains present under the appearances of bread and wine as long as these appearances last.

3. In order to fulfil Christ's command, the priest at Mass partakes not only of the species of the bread, but also of the form of the wine. Formerly both species were administered also to the faithful laity. But owing to manifold difficulties, the Church has departed from this custom, and now the Holy Eucharist is administered to the laity only in the form of bread.

4. Since the time of the Apostles the Catholic Church has always

believed and taught that Jesus Christ is really and truly present in the Blessed Sacrament. Saint Paul writes: "The chalice of benediction, which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? And the bread, which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord?" (1 Corinthians 10:16). Saint Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, a pupil of the Apostles, who suffered martyrdom in 107, writes: "The Holy Eucharist is the flesh of our Redeemer, the same flesh which suffered for us, and which the Eternal Father in His love raised from the dead." ("Eucharist" is the Greek expression for the Blessed Sacrament; its literal meaning is, "a good gift.") Another Church Father, Saint Justin Martyr, who died in the year 166, writes: "We are taught that this blessed food is the flesh and blood of the Son of God become man." In the Roman catacombs, which served the early Christians as burial places and sometimes also as churches, are to be found pictures and inscriptions which clearly indicate belief in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Throughout all the centuries innumerable persons have testified that the Catholic Church has always held this belief. All Eastern Churches hold this faith, even those which separated very early from the Catholic Church. Even if we no longer knew the words spoken by Jesus at the Last Supper, this constant faith of the Catholic Church would be sufficient proof of the Real Presence. For it is quite impossible for the Church to err in such an important matter, since Jesus and the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth, are with her always.

Therefore it is perfectly certain that Jesus is present on our altar with flesh and blood, as Man and as God. It is "his delight to be with the children of men" (Proverbs 8:31). How great must be His love for us!

What does the priest do at the Consecration?

At the Consecration the priest changes bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

What is on the altar after the Consecration?

After the Consecration Jesus is present on the altar under the appearances of bread and wine.

A Witness from the Catacombs

In the days when the Christians were persecuted by the pagans, a pious boy called Tarsicius was sent by a priest to bring the Holy Viaticum to some Christians who were in prison awaiting death. The pagans did not know the boy and it was thought that he would be allowed to enter the prison without hindrance. Tarsicius joyfully agreed to undertake this mission and reverently set out bearing the Blessed Sacrament in his clothes. Some pagans who met him believed he carried a secret message to the Christians, and tried to force him to give it up. He courageously resisted until he died under their blows. The Christians honoured him as a martyr, and Pope Damasus (died 384) had the following inscription placed on his tomb: "When Saint Tarsicius bore the Blessed Sacrament, a savage mob tried to force him to deliver the Sacred Host to the impious; but Tarsicius defended the Divine Sacrament and sacrificed his life rather than betray the Heavenly Body to the raging dogs."

This is one of many inscriptions which show the faith of the early Christians in the Real Presence.

The Suspended Monstrance

In order to strengthen our faith in the Real Presence, God has from time to time worked striking miracles through the Blessed Sacrament, At Favernay in France one night a fire broke out in the church. It started on the altar, on which were kept two large Hosts, enclosed between two crystals in a monstrance. The whole altar with its trappings was reduced to ashes, but the monstrance with the two Hosts remained intact. For thirty-three hours it hung in the air without any visible support. Over 10,000 people, witnessed this striking miracle at their leisure. At the end of this time, the monstrance in the presence of a large crowd of people, slowly descended on a corporal, which had been placed on the ground. The truth of this fact was confirmed, after a strict examination, by the Archbishop of Besancon in a public document in which it was declared to be an indisputable miracle. Three months later (1608) Saint Francis de Sales visited the church and venerated the two Hosts. One of the Hosts is still venerated in Favernay, to which many pilgrimages are made for the purpose. The other Host some time after was taken to the neighbouring town of Dôle, where it was

lost during the French Revolution.

How We Should Honour and Love the Blessed Sacrament

1. Because Jesus Christ, our Lord and God, is present in the Blessed Sacrament, we owe to this Sacrament the highest form of veneration, i.e., adoration or divine worship. The Church exhibits this worship in various ways.

Costly and beautiful churches are built in honour of the Blessed Sacrament. The greatest care is taken in adorning the altar - usually the high altar - on which the Sacrament is kept. The tabernacle is lined with silk. Smaller consecrated Hosts are kept in a "ciborium" for administering Holy Communion to the faithful; a larger Host is kept in the "monstrance" or "ostensorium" for public exposition. Generally at least those parts of the ciborium and the monstrance which come into contact with the Sacred Hosts are of silver, plated with gold and blessed by the bishop. The ciborium is covered with a little silk cloth. A "perpetual light" burns in front of the altar where the Blessed Sacrament is kept. When the Sacred Host is exposed in the monstrance for adoration, incense is burned before it at the beginning and at the end of devotions. The clouds of incense indicate that we adore the Blessed Sacrament and desire that our prayers may ascend to God and be pleasing to Him. Relics of the holy martyrs are enclosed in every altar on which Mass is celebrated. In the early days of Christianity the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was offered beside the graves of the martyrs when possible.

One of the most beautiful feasts of the Catholic Church is Corpus Christi, that is, the feast of the Body of the Lord. On this day the Blessed Sacrament is not only venerated in the church, but in Catholic countries is carried through the streets and fields at the head of a procession in order that it may be adored by the whole population.

2. Every Catholic should worship the Blessed Sacrament to the best of his ability. When the Sacred Host is carried past us on the feast of Corpus Christi, we should kneel down reverently; and also when we meet the Blessed Sacrament carried by the priest to the sick. When

passing a church, men should manifest their reverence for the Blessed Sacrament by raising their hats and women by making the Sign of the Cross. When entering or leaving a church we should salute Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament with some such words as: "Jesus, I live for Thee; Jesus, I die for Thee; Jesus, I am Thine in life and in death!" When passing the tabernacle we should bend the right knee to the ground. While in Church, our attention should be constantly directed to the altar, where Jesus is, and our whole demeanour should show reverence and adoration.

3. Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament merits not only our adoration, but also our most fervent love. His love for us must be exceeding great, as He descends from Heaven to dwell among us day and night. Therefore we on our part should show him all the love we can! Let us visit the church frequently to adore our Saviour and best Friend. Let us visit Him not only on Sundays and holydays of obligation, when He calls us through the commandment of His Church, but also on other days, to offer Him our veneration and love and to acquaint Him with our needs.

What kind of veneration do we owe to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament?

We owe Him the highest kind of veneration, namely, divine worship.

The Eucharistic Congresses

In order to show the greatest possible honour to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, Eucharistic Congresses have been held in various cities since the year 1881. An International Eucharistic Congress is a great gathering of people in one place to adore the Blessed Sacrament, to which the whole world is invited - a sort of Universal Feast of Corpus Christi. The first Eucharistic Congress took place in 1881 at Lille, France. That of 1910 in Montreal, Canada; that of 1926 in Chicago; that of 1928 in Sydney, Australia.

Joy in our Saviour's presence and love of His Person have increased enormously as a consequence of these Congresses.

How a Tyrolese Congregation Protected the Blessed Sacrament from

Sacrilege

In 1916 the parish priest and the curate of Torcegno in the Valsugana valley in South Tyrol were taken prisoners by the Italians and at the order of the Italian military authorities the inhabitants had to quit the neighbourhood. But the Blessed Sacrament was still in the church. How could it be brought to a safe place? This question caused the poor people great anxiety because they had not the slightest hope that one of their priests would be liberated. To leave the Blessed Sacrament behind without protection was not to be thought of. Finally they solved the difficulty in the following way: A well brought-up boy of six years was chosen to administer Holy Communion to those who desired to receive it. On the following Sunday the congregation assembled in the church. Profound silence reigned. All were deeply moved and anxiously expectant. Now the boy appears dressed in white, angellike, and walks hesitatingly to the altar. A voice is heard beginning the Confiteor, in which all join, with tears in their eyes. Then the boy mounts the steps of the altar, opens the tabernacle, and reverently brings forth the ciborium. He then goes to the communion rails, where most of the faithful are kneeling, and administers the Sacred Hosts to them, several to each, until the ciborium is empty. Finally he washes the ciborium with wine and water and gives this to one of the faithful to drink.

The above was related by a bishop to the Holy Father and the latter, deeply touched, sent the child his blessing and a gift to the faithful Tyrolese. (*Sendbote des göttl. Herzens Jesu*, 1916, IX)

The Holy Mass

Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist in order to be constantly with us with His flesh and blood after the Ascension, and chiefly to enable us to offer a fitting sacrifice to God.

1. Sacrifices have always been offered to God. In the Old Covenant God Himself, through Moses, instituted them for the Israelites who desired to show their love and veneration of their Lord. There were gifts consisting of animals, fruits, incense, bread, or wine. The, people, as it were, invited God to a repast provided by themselves. But these sacrifices were only symbols of the worshippers themselves, who desired to dedicate themselves entirely to God. A sacrifice was at the same time a thanksgiving for benefits received, a prayer for new graces, and a reparation for offences committed against God. All the sacrifices of the Old Testament were symbolic of the one sacrifice offered by Jesus Christ on the Cross. This was the only sacrifice worthy of God. By it Jesus Christ paid infinite honour to His Father, atoned for the outrages committed against God, and merited pardon, grace, and salvation for sinners.

2. Jesus desired that His sacrifice should be continued for all time, in order that all His followers might be able to be present at and draw abundant graces from it. Hence He offered the sacrifice of the Cross also in another form, namely, that of bread and wine. Before He offered Himself on the Cross, He offered Himself in an unbloody manner, under the appearances of bread and wine, at the Last Supper: "This is my body, which is given for you!" "This is my blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins." When Jesus uttered these words, He sacrificed His Body and Blood for us. When He added: "Do this in commemoration of me," He commanded His Apostles and their successors to continue to offer this sacrifice to the end of time.

The Catholic Church has always taught that at the Last Supper Jesus instituted not only a Sacrament, but also a sacrifice. Saint Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews (12:10) writes: "We have an altar whereof, they have no power to eat who serve the tabernacle." (*note: Those who served the tabernacle; that is, the Temple, were the*

Jews, who did not believe in Jesus, yet clung to the ritual precepts of the Old Testament.) Apart from Holy Scripture, this sacrifice is described in the oldest Christian writings. For example, Saint Hippolytus, who died about the year 235, wrote: "The precious Body and Blood of Christ is offered up daily on the mysterious table." The early Christians expressed their faith in this sacrifice in the pictures which they left us in the catacombs. The ancient name "host" also points to this faith, for "*hostia*" is a Latin word meaning "sacrifice." The Greek, although it has been separated from the Catholic Church since the second century and for centuries previously stood in the closest relation with the western Church, (*that is, that part of the Western Church which remained faithful to the Pope*) also has the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

If the Holy Eucharist were not a sacrifice as well as a Sacrament, Christ would not be "a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech" as He is described in Psalm 109:4, for Melchisedech had sacrificed bread and wine (Genesis 14:18). Again, the prophecy of the Prophet Malachias would not have been fulfilled: "In every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation? (Malachi 1:11).

3. The sacrifice which Jesus instituted at the Last Supper and which is offered constantly since then by the Church, is called the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. It is the most beautiful commemoration of the Sacrifice of the Cross, for in it we have the Sacrifice of the Cross itself. At Holy Mass we first offer to God bread and wine; but at the Consecration, Jesus comes down from Heaven upon the altar, and replaces the bread and wine by His Body and Blood, offering them for us to His Heavenly Father, exactly as He once offered them on the Cross, except that He does not die. Whenever we assist at Holy Mass, we should consider that we are sharing in the Sacrifice of the Cross, that we are, as it were, standing at the foot of the Cross, and see Jesus shedding His Precious Blood for us and dying for us. Therefore, when the priest elevates the Sacred Host at the Consecration, we should exclaim lovingly and gratefully: "Hail, true Body of Jesus Christ, who didst sacrifice Thyself for me on the Cross! With profound humility I adore Thee." And when the priest elevates the Chalice, let us pray: "Hail, Precious Blood of Christ, shed for me on the Cross. In deep humility I adore Thee!"

How great must be the love of Jesus Christ, since, not content with sacrificing Himself for us on Mount Calvary, He continually offers this sacrifice in all lands and at all times!

Who instituted the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass?

Jesus Christ instituted the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass at the Last Supper.

What takes place at Holy Mass?

At Holy Mass Jesus Christ offers His body and blood for us to His Heavenly Father.

What is the relation between the Mass and the Sacrifice of the Cross?

In the Mass the Sacrifice of the Cross is offered in an unbloody manner.

What the Holy Mass Is to a Pious Scholar

John Frederick Henry Schlosser, a learned jurist, who was a convert from Protestantism to the Catholic Church (1851), once said: "I cannot make anyone understand the infinite consolation my heart receives every day at Holy Mass, this unbloody commemoration of the death of Jesus Christ. All earthly thoughts recede; my moral strength revives like a drooping flower in the morning dew, and I feel the Blood of Christ mysteriously coursing through my soul, rich in graces. I must cry out to all men, nay, to the birds of the air, the leaves on the trees, the rays of the sun, to all that breathes and grows, bidding all creatures to thank the good God who, by His death on the Cross, has redeemed me and made me a child of grace! Through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass I receive from the hands of the Church the certainty that God really and truly dwells among men and in men." (Cfr. Beda Weber, *Charakterbilder*, p. 96.)

The Treasures of Grace Concealed in the Holy Mass

1. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass can be offered only to) Almighty God. If it is offered also in honour of the saints, this} means that we remember the saints at Holy Mass, thank God! for the graces He has bestowed on them, and ask for their intercession.

The Holy Mass is offered by Jesus Christ Himself, acting! through the priest as His representative. But those who assist: devoutly also share in the offering. For whom is the Holy Sacrifice offered? For those present, for all Catholic Christians, and for the Poor Souls in Purgatory. In a special manner the priest} offers it for certain living or departed persons. For doing this, he often receives from the faithful an offering, which we call a stipend. This is in no sense a *price* paid for the Mass, but a contribution to the support of the clergy.

2. Through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass we can obtain great and manifold favours from God.

Jesus places himself in our hand, as it were, thus enabling us to offer Him to His Heavenly Father. Through this gift we render God the greatest possible homage and pleasure. The Mass is the most glorious sacrifice of praise. Through the Mass we can thank God most worthily for all His benefits. For we can offer Him His dear Son Jesus Christ in return for His gifts to us. In the eyes of God the Mass is the most acceptable offering of thanksgiving.

Through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass we can also receive: from God forgiveness of our sins and remission of the punishments due to sin. Jesus said: "This is my blood, . . . which has been shed for you and for many unto the remission of sins." The Blood of Jesus Christ constantly appeals to God for mercy and protection for all sinners. It appeals from the Cross, but it appeals also from the altars on which the same sacrifice is offered. To receive forgiveness, it is true, we must repent and confess our sins; but in Holy Mass we receive the graces of repentance and humility. Thus the Holy Mass is the most efficacious sacrifice of atonement. It is a sacrifice of atonement

also for the Poor Souls in Purgatory. In order to alleviate and lessen their sufferings we can do nothing better than offer up, or cause to be offered up, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for them.

Finally through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass we can ask God for all the graces and helps we need, above all, the grace to serve God faithfully till the end, and the grace of salvation. Jesus has promised: "Amen, amen I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name, it shall be given you" (John 16:23). But at no time can we ask for anything so effectively in the name of Jesus as at Holy Mass, when Jesus joins in our petition and sacrifices Himself for us. Thus Holy Mass is the most powerful sacrifice of petition.

3. By His death on the Cross Jesus has opened up to us a source of countless graces. This source flows abundantly in the Mass. The graces which Jesus merited for us on the Cross He imparts to us at Mass. Let us frequent this source of grace as often as possible, so that we may be refreshed and strengthened. Here we can store up an abundance of heavenly treasures if we have a good will and our hearts are sincerely disposed towards God. At Holy Mass we also find the greatest consolation in our anxieties, sufferings, and persecutions. For Jesus, who loves us exceedingly is here, always able and ready to help us. He cries out to us: "Come to me all ye that labour and are burthened, and I will refresh you."

What can we effect with God by offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass?

By offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass to God we (1) give Him the highest honour; (2) thank Him most effectively for His benefits; (3) obtain for ourselves and the Poor Souls in Purgatory remission of sins and of the punishment due to them; (4) obtain the choicest graces for ourselves.

A Conversion Effected through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

Father Buis, a missionary in South Shantung, China, tells a story which shows the Holy Mass to be an efficacious sacrifice of petition for the greatest graces. "I once visited a man who was seriously ill in Ishantswin. At my first visit I had to prepare him for holy Baptism. The poor man's legs were paralyzed and the paralysis

gradually took possession of his whole body. I found him in despair. It comforted him to hear me express my sympathy, but he was in agony and the thought of a terrible death had already taken possession of him. When I spoke to him of Holy Baptism, it was as though the devil had taken complete hold of him and would not relinquish his prey at any price. The sick man began to curse and blaspheme. "There is no such a being as God," he cried. "If there were, how could He torture me thus cruelly in the prime of my life. I will not be baptized; it is utterly useless." His pagan wife joined in the abuse and expressed the wish that he. might soon go to hell! Poor man! Alas, how hard it is for a rich man, - for he was rich, - to tear his heart away from his earthly possessions! My words of comfort were useless; I returned to the chapel unsuccessful, but not without hope. The next morning I said Mass in honour of the most Holy Trinity, offering it for the sick man, and made a special petition to Saint Joseph. Suddenly the sick man was carried into the chapel. He who did not believe, who indeed despaired, had found the faith and was finally resigned to God's will. He asked for holy Baptism. As he was sufficiently instructed and near death, I administered to him the Sacrament of regeneration and also Extreme Unction. Then I had to continue my journey, and so I recommended him to the care of his patron saint, Saint Joseph, who certainly had proved a faithful advocate of his foster-son.

The Ceremonies and Prayers of the Mass - The Preparation for the Sacrifice

1. The Church has surrounded the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass with many beautiful and significant ceremonies and prayers. In this she follows the example of Jesus Christ, who offered this Sacrifice with great ceremony at the Last Supper. He observed the significant rites which were associated with the eating of the Paschal lamb, and added new ceremonies. The aim of the prayers and ceremonies used at Holy Mass is to make us realize more fully how great and holy is the Sacrifice of the Mass and induce us to assist at it more devoutly.

Formerly a portion of the prayers at Holy Mass were said alternately by the priest and the congregation; now the congregation is represented by the server or acolyte.

The best manner of assisting at Holy Mass is to attend to each of the separate parts and say the same prayers as the priest and the server. But other prayers may be said, such as, for instance, the Rosary, or pious hymns may be sung, or - a particularly suitable way of assisting at holy Mass - we may meditate on the Passion of Christ. But special attention should be given to the chief parts, the Offertory, the Consecration, and the Communion, and suitable prayers should be said during all these.

2. The priest begins by reciting certain prayers at the foot of the altar. He prays at the foot of the altar to indicate that he does not feel worthy to ascend the altar. He expresses his desire to approach God's altar and acknowledges his sinfulness; through the server the congregation also confess their guilt. The priest next asks for forgiveness, for himself and for the people. Then he goes up to the altar and, at the right side, reads the "Introit," that is, "Entrance," from the Missal. This prayer varies from day to day. It is an invitation to celebrate the Mass devoutly, and expresses the disposition with which it should be said, and which varies according to the seasons of the ecclesiastical year. For example, in Advent, the Introit usually expresses longing for the promised Redeemer; e.g.: "Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let

the clouds rain the just: let the earth be opened and bud forth a Saviour!"

We then again consider our misery and weakness, and the priest, now standing at the middle of the altar, says three times, "*Kyrie eleison*" (Lord, have mercy), to God the Father, the words being repeated by the server; three times "*Christe eleison*," (Christ, have mercy) to God the Son, and three times "Kyrie eleison," to God the Holy Ghost.

We next consider how merciful God has been to us and how He sent His only begotten Son to redeem us; and the priest chants the hymn first sung by the angels at the birth of Jesus Christ: "*Gloria in excelsis Deo!*" (Glory be to God on high!) thus extolling God's greatness and goodness in inspired words. On days of penance (when the priest wears a purple vestment) and at masses for the dead, the "*Gloria*" is omitted.

After the Gloria (or, if the Gloria is omitted, directly after the Kyrie) the priest turns to the people and says: "*Dominus vobiscum!*" (the Lord be with you!) to which the server answers: "Et cum spiritu tuo" (and with thy spirit). Then with outstretched hands, at the right side of the altar, he reads one or more prayers for the intentions of those present. These prayers are called the "Collect? and vary according to the season of the year and the feast. On the feast of the Ascension, for example, the collect is: "Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we who believe Thine only-begotten Son, our Redeemer, to have ascended this day into Heaven, may ourselves also dwell in spirit in heavenly heights; through our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth in union with the Holy Ghost, one God, for ever and ever, Amen."

3. Instructive lessons from Holy Scripture follow, the first being a lesson from the Books of the Prophets or from the Epistles of the Apostles. On the Feast of Corpus Christi, for example, we read in the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians what the Apostle says concerning the institution of the Holy Eucharist. Usually this lesson is called the "Epistle," that is, "letter." During the Epistle the priest lays his hands on the Missal.

Then follows the "*Gospel*," taken from one of the four Gospels, in

which the Apostles and disciples of Jesus describe His life and teachings. As a rule, such passages are chosen as give the actual words spoken by Jesus. For example, on the Feast of Corpus Christi we read what Jesus, after the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes, says about the Heavenly Bread which He intends to give to His followers. Because the Saviour Himself speaks to us in the Gospel, the Missal is carried to the other, the principal, side of the altar, the side that is to the left of the congregation, but on the right of the crucifix above the altar. As a sign of our reverence for the Saviour, and as a proof of our faith in His words and our willingness to obey them, we stand during the Gospel and make the Sign of the Cross.

On Sundays, holydays of obligation, and other important feasts, we expressly testify our faith by reciting the "Credo" or profession of faith immediately after the Gospel. The priest, standing in the middle of the altar, makes a complete profession of faith; those present at the Holy Mass may also recite the Apostles' Creed.

All the prayers and ceremonies described above are calculated to prepare us for the sacrifice that now follows by filling us with holy thoughts and a desire for heavenly things.

What are the principal parts of the Mass?

The principal parts of the Mass are the Offertory, the Consecration, and the Communion.

How the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is Treasured in the Catholic Church

Christians have always loved and prized the Mass and have made the greatest sacrifices in order to be able to assist at it. Dionysius of Alexandria, who lived in the third century, when the Christians were bitterly persecuted by the pagans, relates the following: "We did not omit the Holy Ceremony even when we were oppressed and persecuted on all sides. Any spot in which we happened to pass our troubled lives, separated from one another, in the fields, in the desert, or on board a vessel, served us as a temple in which to celebrate the Sacrifice." In Rome the Christians of that. time often celebrated the Sacrifice of the Mass in their subterranean burial places (Catacombs). Even here they were in constant danger of

being attacked and put to death. But they were not deterred by this danger from assisting at Mass. In 16th century England, under the reign of the Protestant Queen Elizabeth, it was forbidden to celebrate or attend Holy Mass and fines or imprisonment were imposed upon those who disobeyed; any person known to have sheltered a priest was punished by death. Yet the Catholics were not deterred from sheltering priests and hearing Mass in garrets and other hidden places.

Many Catholics living in mountainous districts or in pagan countries walk many miles in order to hear Mass on Sunday.

In the World War Holy Mass was celebrated on the field of battle and brought the greatest consolation to the Catholic soldiers. A war chaplain of the Tyrolese archers relates the following: "When my archers have been posted on the cold hill-tops at night, they come down at about three or four o'clock, half frozen, from a height of almost 9000 feet. The projecting branches of the dwarf pines form my confessional. There in a recess a makeshift altar is erected, and they kneel around it. Their limbs are stiff with cold and their clothing torn and dirty after months of hardships in the mountains; but their hearts are warm, and their eyes are raised with simple piety to their Lord when at the Consecration He is elevated on the altar. Then they receive holy Communion. I was with the archers for three months, and not a day passed on which from twenty to eighty archers of one battalion did not receive Communion. The officers mostly give the men a good example."

It was terribly difficult on the rocky Dolomites to cut trenches into the hard stone. One day a mass was to be said for the archers in the first trench, directly behind the firing line; but the shells of the enemy whistled and burst incessantly over the Tyrolese frontier. The chaplain, standing in the trench, appeared well above the top. The altar was made low down in the trench, and the chaplain celebrated Mass on his knees. The archers also knelt low down and received Holy Communion. Thus, notwithstanding the incessant firing of the French, the Holy Sacrifice was offered up and many of the men received Communion. (*Bonifazius-Kalender, 1917*)

The Ceremonies and Prayers of Holy Mass - The Sacrifice Proper

The preparatory ceremonies and prayers are followed by the Sacrifice proper. It consists in the "Offertory" and the actual sacrifice of the Victim, or Consecration.

1. Before the Offertory the priest removes the silk covering from the chalice. A silver, gold-plated paten covers the chalice and on it lies the sacrificial bread or "host." The priest elevates the bread by means of the paten and offers it to God. Then he pours wine and water into the chalice and elevates this also. We who assist at the Mass, offer the bread and wine to God with the priest. Formerly the faithful used to bring their gifts to the altar at the Offertory, and from these the priest selected as much bread and wine as was required for the Sacrifice of the Mass and Communion. Even though this is now no longer customary, we must and should look upon the gifts offered by the priest as our gifts and offer them to God with him. The priest next asks God repeatedly to deign to consecrate these gifts and change them into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, thus preparing a sacrifice worthy of Him. We offer up the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in advance to God, and with Jesus Christ we offer ourselves. For if we possess sanctifying grace, we are one body with Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27). We offer ourselves to God, that is, we tell Him that we wish to belong to Him whole and entire, to serve Him with all our strength, and to do His will in all things. That we should offer ourselves with Jesus Christ is indicated by the mingling of water with the wine.

After the Offertory follows the *Lavabo*, when the priest washes his hands. This is to remind us that we should assist at the Holy Sacrifice with pure souls, entirely free from sin. This was the lesson which the Saviour wished to teach His Apostles when He washed their feet at the Last Supper.

2. Before Jesus changed the bread and wine into His Body and Blood at the Last Supper, He gave thanks to His Heavenly Father. The priest also, before the Consecration, offers a prayer of

thanksgiving to God. This prayer is called the "Preface," that is, the introduction to the Consecration. The Preface concludes with the words of praise: "*Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus,*" "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts. Full are the heavens and the earth of Thy glory!" The angels in Heaven praise God with these words, as Holy Scripture says (Isaiah 6:3; Apocalypse 4:8). To this angelic hymn the priest adds the words with which the multitude greeted Jesus when He entered Jerusalem a short time before His Passion: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest!" To remind us that the Saviour will descend upon the altar at the Consecration, a bell is rung at the "*Sanctus*."

After the "Sanctus" the priest asks God to accept the sacrifice for the salvation of all who belong to the Church, and in particular for the faithful present and those whom he wishes to favour in a particular manner. This prayer for the living begins with the word, "*Memento*," in English "Be mindful," i.e., of Thy servants, O Lord, and hence is called the "Commemoration of the Living." The priest invokes the saints in Heaven and, with confidence in their intercession, beseeches God once more to consecrate our sacrificial gifts.

3. Now comes the most sacred moment - the Consecration. God now answers our petitions and sanctifies our sacrifice. In the name of Jesus the priest pronounces over the bread the words spoken by the Saviour at the Last Supper: "This is my body." At this moment the Son of God comes down from Heaven and conceals Himself under the form of bread. Henceforth He is our sacrifice. The priest genuflects, elevates the Sacred Host before all the people, and -all bow in adoration. We may say: **"Jesus, I live for thee; Jesus, I die for thee; Jesus, I am thine in life and in death. Hail, true Body of Jesus Christ, sacrificed on the Cross for me! In deepest humility I adore thee!"**

Then the priest pronounces over the wine the words with which Jesus changed wine into His Blood at the Last Supper, and again he genuflects, elevates the chalice before the people, and all once more adore Jesus: **"Jesus be merciful to me! Jesus, pardon my sins! Hail, O precious Blood of Jesus Christ that has been shed for me on the cross! In deepest humility I adore thee."**

Our sacrificial gifts are now sanctified. Not only the bread and the

wine, but we ourselves. For we also have offered ourselves as an oblation to God, and we are one body with Jesus Christ, who offers us with Poa God accepts the sacrifice and lovingly draws us to Himself. We are now more closely united to Him than before.

From the Consecration to the Communion Jesus remains as victim on the altar.

To remind us that the Sacrifice of the Cross is being offered, the priest here repeatedly makes the Sign of the Cross over the sacrificial gifts, at the same time begging God graciously to accept this sacrifice and through it to permit us to attain to salvation. The priest asks this also for those who have died in the faith. This prayer is called the "Commemoration of the Dead."

The prayers from the Sanctus to the Commemoration of the Dead are silent. They are called the "Canon" of the Mass, that is, that part which remains unchanged throughout most of the year.

The priest recites the prayers of the Mass not only for himself, but in the name of all who assist at the Holy Sacrifice. All should therefore join in spirit in these prayers.

What the Holy Mass is to Believing Soldiers

In the autumn of 1916, a German lieutenant wrote from the Somme: ". . . For weeks a battle has raged on the Somme. … The artillery, with relatively few men, is scattered along the whole front, and in the present situation there is no chance of administering the Sacraments to the men. But our kind chaplain knows how to overcome all obstacles. He came with his van as far as was safe for the precious horses, and proceeded into the midst of the fight through districts where mine after mine was laid, and often ventured into the firing line. And now something sublime and glorious occurs, viz.: the celebration of Holy Mass in the midst of a battle. One of the largest shelters was used and everything that might be in the way, - munition cases, rifles, cooking utensils, scabbards, revolvers, knapsacks, - was removed to a distance. At one end of a long, low enclosure, dimly lighted by a taper, stood a simple crucifix. It is as though we were back in the catacombs. The gunners had already received the Sacrament of Penance and now

stood, densely massed, waiting to hear Holy Mass. Presently the familiar prayers of the priest could be heard, like the sound of a bell reaching our ears from home - our home on earth and our home in Heaven: *Kyrie eleison, Sursum corda, Agnus Dei*, and on many a countenance the expression of apathy gave way to one of happy, childlike devotion. Hands that were wont to throw grenades or fire guns, now clasped the rosary, and many a soldier fixed his gaze on a pious picture in his prayer-book, given him by a loving mother, perhaps. Their devotion was not disturbed by the trembling of the roof under exploding shells. O Death, where is thy sting? Soon the Lord Jesus will come with Flesh and Blood among His children. Now all were kneeling and the priest went round among the crowded little congregation with the Blessed Sacrament and administered to each his Saviour. *Ite missa est* - a final glance of thanksgiving. Already the battle is on again, the battery is firing, the struggle goes on. But there is a change in the hearts of these men; for now peace and happiness reign within them. They look upon the day as a holy day and all feel like children of one mother, the Holy Church, who spreads her protecting mantle over them."

The Ceremonies and Prayers of Holy Mass - The Sacrificial Repast and the Conclusion

1. In the Old Testament sacrifices were usually followed by a secret repast. At this repast those who offered sacrifices felt as if they were guests of God. In the Holy Mass, too, the sacrifice is followed by a sacred banquet. God invites us to His table and in His paternal goodness gives us back our gifts after He has sanctified them, and feeds us with the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in Holy Communion. It is only thus we can share fully in the graces of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

2. The Communion is preceded by certain preparatory prayers and ceremonies.

First the Lord's Prayer is recited - "*Pater Noster*." In this reference is made to Holy Communion, especially in the petition: "Give us this day our daily bread," namely, the bread of our souls! Grant that we may receive it worthily and that it may be a nourishing food for our souls. The priest expands the last petition, "Deliver us from evil." He asks God to protect us especially from sin, and to bestow upon us both inward and outward peace.

Before Jesus gave the bread to the Apostles, at the Last Supper, He broke it into several pieces. The priest also breaks the Sacred Host into three parts before Communion. This is a reminder that before Jesus could become the food of our souls, He had, as it were, to be broken, tortured, and slain. Therefore the priest makes the Sign of the Cross over the chalice with one part of the Sacred Host and then lets this part fall into the chalice to indicate that, at the Resurrection, the Body and Blood of Christ were reunited and that both are but one sacrifice.

In remembrance of the death of Christ the priest prays to the Saviour lying on the altar before him: "Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us! Grant us peace."

3. Then the priest, bowing low, asks that the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ may insure his salvation and that he (the priest) may never be separated from Jesus. Finally he thrice repeats the words which the pagan centurion spoke to Jesus when He was about to enter his house and heal his sick servant: **"Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; say but the word, and my soul shall be healed."** (The centurion said, "my servant"; Matthew 8:8) At the same time the priest strikes his breast three times as a sign of his unworthiness; a bell is sounded, and he reverently receives the Sacred Host, after which he drinks the Precious Blood from the chalice. This is the priest's Communion.

Formerly all the faithful who were present at Holy Mass received Communion with the priest. The Church desires that this custom should be revived. At least we should receive Holy Communion spiritually, that is, we should elicit a vivid desire to possess Jesus and ask Him to come into our souls in a spiritual manner. Hence we should say with the priest three times: "Lord, I am not worthy," and the following prayer: "O my Jesus! Thou art present in the Sacred Host. I adore Thee. I love Thee with my whole heart. I am sorry that I have offended Thee. My soul longs for Thee. Come to me with Thy grace and remain with me until death."

4. After the Communion the priest recites some prayers of thanksgiving on the Epistle side of the altar. These prayers vary according to the season of the year and the feast. On the Feast of Corpus Christi, for example, he says: "Grant, O Lord, we beseech Thee, that we may be filled with the everlasting fruition of Thy divinity, which is prefigured by the temporal reception of Thy precious Body and Blood."

After the thanksgiving, the priest, standing at the middle of the altar, announces that the sacrifice is over. "*Ite, missa est!*" he says, that is, "Go, you are dismissed!" From the word "dismissal" ("*missa*") the whole sacrifice is supposed to have its name.

5. Before the faithful depart, the priest blesses all with the words: "May Almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, bless you!" He then reads the so-called "Last Gospel" on the gospel side. It is an extract from one of the four Gospels, generally the beginning of the Gospel of Saint John, in which he narrates that the Word of

God (i.e., the Son of God) was with His Father from all eternity, but that He came down from Heaven, became man, and dwelt among us in order to make us children of God. The concluding words are: "And the Word was made flesh [here all genuflect], and dwelt among us; and we saw his glory, the glory as it were of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." In the Mass the Word of God has once again come down from Heaven, dwelt among us, and brought grace and truth into our hearts. The server answers: "*Deo gratias!*" ("Thanks be to God!")

The more we understand the ceremonies and prayers of the Mass, and the more devoutly we join in them, the more we realize how beautiful they are, and that the Holy Mass is a sublime work of art created by the Holy Ghost.

The Mass and Communion as Divine Sources of Strength

French Jesuit missionaries in Tritchinopli, India, give an account of the marvellous conversion and deeply religious life of a distinguished Brahmin lady. (*Brahmins are the highest Hindu caste, the caste of priests, though not all of them exercise priestly functions.*) When this woman was ten years old, she was betrothed to a young Brahmin, who took her to his house when she was sixteen. The young husband had made his studies in the Jesuit College and successfully passed an important state examination. At first a discontented Brahmin, he later became convinced of the truth of the Catholic religion and converted his gifted young wife. She was baptized with him and received the name Anna Maria. When they were catechumens, (*note: Pagans preparing for Baptism by getting instruction and leading a Christian life are called catechumens. In India the time for preparation is usually a year; in other missions two or three years.*) and abandoned the pagan ceremonies, a storm burst forth, which reached its climax when the parents of Anna Maria heard that their daughter had been baptized. Her mother cunningly enticed her back to her parental home with her first-born child, and kept her there in strict captivity for five months. Flattery, threats, harsh treatment - all means were tried to induce her to apostatize; but she remained firm. When her husband came to get her, he was driven off with abuse and insults. Finally, when her parents were about to take her to a distant place, where they believed the power

of Baptism would be "extinguished" by an abominable pagan ceremony, the young husband succeeded in taking her and the child by force from the train and bringing them home. Now Anna Maria became the leader of a Christian congregation who gradually gathered round her home. Immeasurable blessings resulted from her noble example and zeal; the missionaries affirm that she did more than ten men could do to spread the Catholic religion. She bore bravely the trials which God sent her, especially the death of her only son.

"If you ask me," writes Father Billard, "whence Anna Maria obtains the strength and courage to live a life of such heroic Christian virtue and self-sacrifice, I answer unhesitatingly, - from her great love of the Saviour in the Blessed Sacrament. The moment she began to understand the mystery of the tabernacle, her soul found a firm resting-place. Holy Mass and frequent - almost daily - Communion are her greatest happiness and the true source of her strength. When I see her come to Holy Communion day after day, with her two faithful companions, Rosammal, the wife of Ramaswamys, a friend of her husband, and Gondammal, the faithful helper of our nursing sisters, I always feel that I must thank the Lord for having entrusted such noble souls to our care, and ask Him to send us many more like them."

Language and Vestments Used at Mass

1. Holy Mass is not said in the vernacular, but in Latin. In a small part of the Church it is said in Old Slavonic or some other ancient tongue. The Church sticks to these ancient tongues to show how ancient and reverent the Sacrifice of the Mass is and also for the reason that she does not want to have the traditional prayers altered. Spoken languages are constantly changing, and if the Missal were written in one of these, it would have to be changed every fifty or one hundred years.

In by far the greater part of the world Holy Mass is said in Latin. In this way the Latin or Western Church has one common language. The Pope corresponds in this language with the bishops and priests. This promotes the unity of the Church. If the Mass were said in the vernacular of each country, Latin would go out of use in the Church and the Church would no longer have a common language and the unity of the faithful might be endangered.

The prayers of the Mass are well known to the faithful, for many prayerbooks contain them in both Latin and English. The Church desires the faithful to use these prayers, if possible, in the original Latin, so that they may be enabled to "pray the Mass with the priest" (Pius X).

2. When celebrating Mass, the priest wears over his usual clerical cassock certain ceremonial vestments, as a reminder that a sacred and supernatural action is taking place at the altar. Each one of these vestments has its peculiar significance. The *alb*, a long write robe, indicates purity of soul. The *maniple*, which the priest wears over his left arm and which was originally a handkerchief for wiping away sweat, indicates that he must not shirk any labour for God. The *stole*, the broad silk strip which the priest wears on his shoulders, indicates the sacerdotal office, which rests on him like a sacred burden. The *chasuble*, worn on top of the other vestments, is the vestment proper for the Holy Sacrifice. It usually has on it the form of a large cross, to remind us of Christ crucified, whose sacrifice is renewed by the priest.

Vestments of different colours are used according to the seasons of the year and the different holydays. White signifies innocence and festive joy; red, the ardour of charity and the blood shed for Christ; green, the hope in eternal life; purple (or rather ash colour), penance; black, mourning.

Thus everything connected with the Mass has a deep significance; the more we learn to understand this significance, the more we shall be edified and the more effectively our souls will be elevated to God.

Why does the Church use the Latin language in the Mass?

The Church uses the Latin Language in the Mass because this language is unchangeable, and because it is the official language of the whole Church and a mark of her unity.

How an Unhappy Catholic Who had Lost the Faith Finally Obtained Peace

William von Kiigelgen, the painter (died 1867), who was a zealous Lutheran, in his "Recollections" relates that his father, though raised a Catholic, had become indifferent towards his religion when he reached manhood and married a Protestant woman, promising that all the children should be allowed to follow their mother's faith. He continues: "My father's heart gradually yearned for the revealed faith and his memory took him back to the happy days of his childhood, when he used to go to Mass with his mother and found good impulses and consolation in the blessings of the Church. It was natural that, with the spiritual desire reawakened within him, he should be drawn to the same place where he had formerly found heavenly blessings. Thus he began to go to Mass again, tentatively at first, then more frequently, and finally, in his last years, every morning. The needs of his heart led him to discover a spiritual adviser in the person of a worthy and highly esteemed priest, Father Mende, to whom he gladly entrusted himself for spiritual guidance. Thus he again became a practical member of the Catholic Church. . . . He felt the joy of one who, after a long separation, once more enters the paternal home and finds everything unchanged. He was often heard to say how wonderful it was that, while the whole world had become modernized since his youth, and Protestantism

had also been caught in the tide of change, the Catholic Church alone had remained unaltered. My father found that Church exactly as she was when he abandoned her, not only in her dogmas, constitution, and worship, but even in the vestments worn by the priest and every movement made at the altar. He felt there was no room for doubt that the eternal, unchangeable, revealed Truth, enthroned high above the fickleness of human taste and human thoughts, had found its only adequate form in the Catholic Church.

The Effects of Holy Communion in the Soul

1. God desires to bestow upon our souls, besides the natural, a higher, supernatural life. He gave us this supernatural life, called sanctifying grace, at Baptism. If we have lost it through mortal sin, we can regain it by worthily receiving the Sacrament of Penance: In order to preserve this supernatural life of the soul it must be nourished just as the natural life by suitable food. Jesus in His infinite love has given us as food for our souls His crucified Body and His Blood shed for us on the Cross. He said: "The bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world" (John 6:52). We receive this Bread in Holy Communion.

Through the reception of the Sacred Body of Jesus Christ the supernatural life, i.e., sanctifying grace within us, grows stronger and stronger, until it finally passes into eternal life. Jesus says: "As the living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me" (John 6:58). But if we do not eat this Bread of the soul, the supernatural life will die within us, and we shall also lose eternal life. For Jesus said: ""Amen, amen I say unto you, **except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you**" (John 6:54).

2. In what way does this Bread of the soul affect us?

When we receive the Sacred Host, Jesus invisibly enters our soul and unites Himself with us most intimately. Hence the reception of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ is called "Communion," that is, incorporation. As iron is penetrated by fire until it becomes glowing and bright itself, so our souls become penetrated by the Divinity of Jesus and luminous with beauty. Jesus increases sanctifying grace in the soul, thereby giving us a claim to the higher happiness of Heaven. At the same time our souls are filled with burning love for Him. Even when Jesus is no longer in us with His Flesh and Blood, His grace remains, and with it His love, and they maintain within us a deep love for Him. For He said: "**He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, shall abide in me, and I in him.**" (John 6:57)

Our love for Jesus gives us zeal and strength to do all that He asks of us and to resist temptations. Therefore we do not easily fall into mortal sin after receiving Holy Communion. The oftener we receive the Bread of life, the stronger will our love for Jesus become, the more will our evil inclinations be weakened, the farther removed we shall be from mortal sin, and the surer is our eternal salvation. For Jesus says: "**He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life; and I will raise him up in the last day.**" (John 6:55)

There is nothing that so effectively protects us against sin or makes our eternal salvation so secure as *frequent Communion*. It is the most efficacious means by which sinners can rid themselves of their evil inclinations. Our venial sins will be obliterated in Holy Communion if we repent of them.

3. Jesus did not expressly say how often we should receive His Body and Blood to obtain eternal life. But by calling His Body bread, and giving it the form of bread, He showed that we should receive Him often. As we feed the body daily, so, too, we should nourish the soul frequently. Experience shews that the full efficacy of Holy Communion is obtained only by those who receive it frequently, if possible every day.

The Church enjoins upon us, under pain of grievous sin, to receive Holy Communion *at least* once a year, at Easter time, and before death, as Viaticum for the journey to eternity; but it is her urgent desire that we should communicate much oftener. Every person who is in earnest about his soul's salvation should make it a rule to receive Holy Communion at least once a month, preferably on the first Friday or the first Sunday.

The Church extols the infinite riches and the heavenly bliss which Holy Communion holds for us in these words: "Thou didst feed thy people with the food of angels, and gavest them bread from heaven prepared without labour; having in it all that is delicious, and the sweetness of every taste." (Wisdom 16:20)

What does Holy Communion effect in us?

Holy Communion unites us to Jesus and increases sanctifying

grace in us; it strengthens the love of God and keeps us from mortal sin; finally, it assures our eternal salvation.

The Lord of Glory
(Oh, wondrous story!)
Hath made His home within my breast;
Bowed down before Him,
My soul, adore Him,
Who 'neath Thy roof vouchsafes to rest.
Good angels aid me,
The God who made me,
Who died to save me,
Is now my Guest.
Ah! Softly sing Him
Sweet songs, and bring Him
Your burning love, your worship blest.

- *The Manna of the New Testament*

When God had miraculously freed the Israelites - at that time His chosen people - from the bondage of Egypt, they had to wander about in the desert for forty years and endured many hardships, before they were permitted to enter Chanaan, the "Promised Land" of their forefathers, later called Palestine. During their wanderings God fed them with manna, savoury white food which fell from Heaven abundantly every morning until they had entered the Promised Land. When they saw this bread for the first time, they cried out, full of wonder: "Man-hu?" (What is that?") Hence the name "manna." Even after many centuries the people remembered this miraculous food with gratitude and praised God, saying: "Thou gavest thy people bread from heaven, having in it the sweetness of every taste" (Wisdom 16:20).

The manna was but the symbol of the even more wonderful Bread of Heaven that God gave His people in the New Testament in the Blessed Sacrament. Every day this Bread comes down from Heaven upon the altar at Holy Mass, and brings to our souls a foretaste of the joy of Heaven, and comforts and strengthens us mightily in our trials and struggles, until our wanderings through this earthly desert are ended and we stand at the gate of our promised land, - Heaven. Christians today can sing with much more justification than the

Israelites of old: "Thou gavest them bread from heaven, having in it the sweetness of every taste."

The Viaticum of Elias the Prophet

By another simile God foreshadowed in the Old Testament the strength we receive from Holy Communion. The prophet Elias reproached King Achab for his wickedness and idolatry and predicted that there would be no rain in the land for three years and six months. The prophecy was fulfilled to the letter. The King and the people acknowledged their wrong, but the Queen, Jezabel, refused to do penance, and persecuted Elias. The prophet had to flee to the desert, where he grew despondent and wished he was dead. He lay down and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said: "Arise and eat!" Elias looked round and saw a loaf and a pitcher of water beside him. He ate and drank, then lay down and slept again. And the angel of the Lord came once more, touched him and said: "Arise and eat, for thou hast far to go." He stood up and ate and drank again, and thus obtained strength to walk twenty days and twenty nights to Horeb, the mountain of God. Then God appeared to him. (Near this mountain God had appeared to Moses in a burning bush; on this mountain He had given the Ten Commandants, for Horeb is the same as Mount Sinai.)

For us the mountain to which we must all go, and where God will appear to us, is Heaven. The road that leads thither is long and difficult; but God, who prepared a repast for the prophet Elias that gave Him strength for his journey, has prepared a still more wonderful repast for us. It consists of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. When we receive Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, we obtain strength to walk confidently on the road to Heaven. But we must partake of the repast frequently.

Blessed Nicholas von der Flue

Many saints have found the Blessed Sacrament to be food not only for their souls, but also for their bodies. It was thus with a Swiss hermit, Blessed Nicholas von der Flüe, known as Brother Klaus. He was born in 1417 of pious peasant parents near Sachseln, Canton Obwalden. In early youth he was drawn to solitude that he might belong to God alone. But at the wish of his parents he espoused a

God-fearing maid. God blessed this marriage with five sons and five daughters, who were all a credit to their parents. Several of the sons were called to high offices. Nicholas himself was elected judge and governor of the Canton (Landamtmann); but he refused the latter position. When he was fifty years old, he felt the call of God and, after his wife had reluctantly consented, left hearth and home and went to a deserted ravine, where a chapel and a little cell were built for him. Here Klaus engaged in prayer and meditation. On Sundays and holydays he went barefooted and bareheaded to the parish church at Sachseln, about four miles distant, received Holy Communion once a month, and, apart from this, never ate or drank anything from the moment he became a hermit until his death, twenty years later (1487). This miracle became widely known, but many declared it to be a fraud. The government of the Canton made an investigation. The whole district as well as Brother Klaus's cell were occupied by a strong guard and the hermit was completely cut off from intercourse with the people. The miracle was confirmed. Later the Bishop of Constance sent his auxiliary to examine into the matter on the occasion of the consecration of the hermit's chapel. The prelate spent half a day in conversation with Brother Klaus in his cell. At last he asked him which virtue appeared to him the most important. Brother Klaus answered, "I think obedience." Then the bishop took a piece of bread which he had brought with him, broke it into three parts, and commanded him to eat it and to drink some wine as a proof of his obedience toward the ecclesiastical authorities. Nicholas reluctantly ate a tiny piece of bread and drank a little wine; whereupon he was attacked by such severe cramps that the people feared for his life. The bishop begged his pardon and declared before all present that he had been obliged to test the servant of God in this way by command of his superior, but was now perfectly convinced that his life was miraculously sustained by the Holy Eucharist.

Asked by his parish priest whence he obtained his strength, Brother Klaus answered: "When I assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and see the priest partake of the heavenly Repast, or partake of it myself, an ocean of spiritual sweetness and strength is poured into my soul and thence flows into my body. Therefore I neither hunger nor thirst for earthly food. The Body and Blood of Christ is my only food; from this I obtain all my strength."

Switzerland is specially grateful to this man of God because he saved the confederacy - then not long in existence - from civil war and consequent destruction. The Cantons had quarrelled at their assembly at Stans (1481) over the division of the spoils taken in the war with Burgundy and over the admission of two towns, Fribourg and Solothurn, and there was grave danger that they might go to war. The parish priest of Stans hastened to Brother Klaus to ask his help. The latter came out of his cell and, after a four hours' walk, appeared at the meeting, where he was received with the greatest respect. He spoke so convincingly of the necessity of peace that, without opposition, they agreed to his proposals and were completely reconciled.

On the 21st of March, 1487, Brother Klaus died a holy death. The whole confederacy mourned for him. God exalted His servant by many miracles. Soon after his death he was publicly invoked and in the year 1669 he was beatified. His feast is commemorated on the 22nd of March. The parish church of Sachseln, where he is buried, is a much visited shrine. Many pilgrims also visit his cell, which has been preserved to the present day.

How to Prepare for Holy Communion - How to Offer Thanksgiving

Holy Communion is efficacious only when received worthily.

1. To receive Holy Communion worthily we must first of all be free from mortal sin. Jesus will not enter a soul in which Satan reigns. Saint Paul exhorts us: "Let a man prove himself; and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice" (1 Corinthians 11:28). Before receiving Holy Communion, therefore, let us examine our conscience to discover whether we are guilty of mortal sin, and if we find we are, let us go to confession before we approach the altar railing. In such a case we may not be content with perfect contrition, but must go to confession.

Any person who receives Holy Communion when he knows he is in the state of mortal sin, commits a sacrilege. Saint Paul writes: "Whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself: and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice. For **he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment [i.e., damnation] to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord**"; that is, he does not distinguish this heavenly Bread from ordinary food (1 Corinthians 11:27-29). Of course, forgiveness can be obtained for this sin by having true sorrow and by doing penance. But an unworthy Communion can result in such hardening of the heart that a person may never repent and consequently be lost for ever.

Before Communion we should also, as far as is possible, cleanse our souls from venial sins by confession or at least by an act of contrition and true repentance.

2. To receive Communion worthily we should pray fervently beforehand, and consider the great honour Jesus is about to bestow on us. To help us in this we may consider the following questions: **Who is coming to me?** (Jesus, my Lord and my God. - O Jesus, I believe in Thee! Jesus, I adore Thee!) **To whom is Jesus coming?** (To me, a poor, sinful creature - O Jesus, I am not worthy of Thy

favour. I am sorry for my sins!) **Why does Jesus come to me?** (Because He loves me and wants to give me life. - O Jesus, I trust in thy goodness! I love Thee above all things! My soul thirsts for Thee!)

It is best to receive Holy Communion during Mass, and to make the above preparation before Holy Mass and join as much as possible in the prayers said by the priest. For Jesus did not institute Holy Communion apart from the Mass, but as a sacrificial repast essentially connected with it.

It is strictly forbidden to take any food or drink from midnight on. This so-called Eucharistic fast has been ordained out of respect for the Food of our souls. Only those who are dangerously ill are exempted from this law. Those also who have been confined to their bed for a month or more may, with their confessor's consent, take some liquid before Holy Communion once or twice a week.

We should approach the table of the Lord in strictly modest dress.

3. Directly before Communion we kneel down at the altar rails. When the server recites the "Confiteor," we should renew our contrition. The priest turns towards us and asks God to pardon us. Then he elevates the Sacred Host before us, saying: "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world," and we humbly adore Our Saviour. Then the priest says three times: "**O Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; say but the word, and my soul shall be healed!**" We should repeat these words with the priest, at the same time striking ourselves thrice on the breast. Then we should raise our heads, open our mouths properly, and rest the tip of the tongue on the under lip. We should either cast down our eyes or look at the Sacred Host. The priest now lays the Sacred Host on our tongue saying: "May the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy soul to everlasting life." We then slowly draw back the tongue and reverently swallow the Sacred Host. If it should stick to the roof of the mouth, we should loosen it with the tongue, never with the finger.

4. We then return to our places with eyes cast down, kneel and converse with our Saviour with all the love of which we are

capable. We should first greet Him humbly, adore Him, thank Him, offer ourselves to Him, and promise to be faithful to Him always; then we should ask Him to give us the grace to do this, and make known to Him our wants. Generally speaking, this "thanksgiving" after Holy Communion should last at least ten minutes.

On the day we have received Communion we should often recall the grace bestowed upon us by the Saviour and take pains to become more and more like Him. "He that saith he [Jesus] abideth in him, ought himself also to walk, even as he walked" (1 John 2:6).

The more carefully we prepare for Holy Communion and the more devout our thanksgiving is, the greater graces we shall obtain from Holy Communion.

What is meant by receiving Holy Communion unworthily?

To receive Holy Communion unworthily is to receive it while conscious of mortal sin.

What should we do immediately after Holy Communion?

After Holy Communion we should adore Jesus and thank Him; we should offer ourselves to Him and present our petitions to Him.

Saint Aloysius's Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament

Saint Aloysius regarded the Blessed Sacrament as the centre and the sun of his life. He assisted at Mass every day. At the Consecration he was seized by the deepest emotion, which vented itself in copious tears. It gave him great joy to serve at Mass. Every day he made many visits to the Blessed Sacrament. He received Holy Communion every week. In order to prepare himself worthily and to return thanks, he divided the week into two parts. The first part he spent in thanksgiving for the last Communion, the second part in preparation for the following one. On the day before he used to speak with touching piety of the happiness to which he looked forward. Many of his brothers in the Society of Jesus, some of them priests, used to try to be near him in order that they might be inspired by his piety and the ardour of his love to greater devotion

and better preparation for the celebration of Holy Mass. The morning Saint Aloysius was to receive Communion, his first thought was of the Saviour who was coming to him. He spent an hour in pious meditation on the Blessed Sacrament. After receiving Communion, he sought out a quiet corner of the church to make his thanksgiving. His heart overflowed with consolation and tears of joy ran down his cheeks. Those who saw him were deeply moved. He spent the forenoon as far as possible in silence, always returning to Jesus in his thoughts.

Thus Saint Aloysius received abundant graces from the Blessed Sacrament and from Holy Communion. He preserved an angelic purity and, while still in his youth, reached the perfect holiness that we so admire in him.

The Necessity of Confirmation

1. When the young Christian grows up, his soul's salvation is threatened by ever greater dangers. The evil inclinations we have inherited from our First Parents become stronger with increasing age. Further, we see so many going the broad and easy way that leads to destruction, that we are strongly tempted to follow their example. Many even set out directly to lead us into sin. Efforts are made to alienate us from the faith and to separate us entirely from Jesus. Ridicule is the weapon mostly used for this purpose. The devil makes use of the dangerous position in which we are placed and redoubles his efforts to plunge us into sin and destruction. Hence we must fight a hard fight for our souls and our salvation, - a fight against three enemies, the flesh (our evil inclinations), the world, and the devil.

2. In order that we may fight this battle with courage and perseverance, remain faithful to Jesus, and save our souls, the Holy Ghost wishes to give us special strength. On the Feast of Pentecost He descended upon the Apostles and strengthened them for the approaching conflict against the Jewish and the pagan world and against the gates of hell. In the same way He desires to come to our assistance and to make us brave soldiers of Christ. The Sacrament instituted for this purpose is called "Confirmation," that is "strengthening," "fortifying."

3. Children who have not yet attained to the use of reason, do not need the Sacrament of Confirmation. But older children and adults require the special assistance of the Holy Ghost which is given in Confirmation. Any Catholic who neglects to receive Confirmation commits a sin and endangers his soul. It is best to receive Confirmation at the age of ten or eleven years, one or two years after one's first Holy Communion. Any person who was not confirmed when young, should receive this Sacrament as soon as possible.

How the Holy Ghost descended on the Apostles and what He effects in the human heart, may be seen in Chapters 21 and 22, supra.

Youthful Heroes

On February Sth, 1597, twenty-six Christians - priests, religious, and lay persons, - were crucified for their faith in Nagasaki, Japan. Among these were three boys, Louis, ten years old, Antony thirteen, and Thomas fourteen. They used to serve at Mass and belonged to the Third Order of Saint Francis. (*note: Saint Francis of Assisi founded one order for men, a second for women, and a third for persons living in the world. But here and there members of the Third Order have become enclosed and live together in religious communities.*) Radiant with joy, the three boys went to martyrdom. As soon as they saw the crosses, they hastened their steps. Louis chose the smallest cross. When he came to it, he kissed it, and at once lay down upon it. Scarcely were all the crosses raised up, when Father Peter Baptist, the leader of the glorious band, began to intone the *Te Deum*. All joined in with loud voices. During the *Te Deum*, Father Peter went into an ecstasy, from which he only awoke in the next life. He looked up to Heaven fixedly and hung rigidly on the cross until his heart was pierced by a lance. He had promised the three boys who were near him that while on the cross he would intone the psalm, "*Laudate pueri Dominum!*" (Children, praise ye the Lord!) and sing it to the end with them. They had practised it long and loved it. Now when the *Te Deum* was finished, the boys waited for Father Peter to intone the Psalm. But he did not awaken from his ecstasy. Then little Antony took courage, intoned the Psalm himself, and with angelic voices the three children sang: "Praise the Lord, ye children! Praise ye the name of the Lord!"

Little Antony was unable to finish the "Gloria Patri," before he received the death stroke. But Louis finished the Psalm; and now, having resolved to die singing, and not knowing what he should sing next, he turned to Father Peter, who hung on the cross beside him, rapt in ecstasy. Louis, obedient even till death, wanted to ask the priest which Psalm he should sing now? But at the moment he turned his head, his heart was pierced by a lance, and his innocent soul ascended to God. Only ten months before he had become a Christian; now he was a saint in Heaven.

The firmness and joy with which these young boys suffered martyrdom was ascribed to the Sacrament of Confirmation, which

had been administered to them only a few months before by Bishop Martinez, S.J. (*Kath. Missionen*, 1897, p. 250)

The Origin of Confirmation - Its Effects

1. After the Apostles had been strengthened by the Holy Ghost, they imparted this strengthening to the other Christians. We read in the Acts of the Apostles that Philip the Deacon preached in the town of Samaria and that all the people believed in Christ, whereupon they were baptized by Philip. When the Apostles heard this, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. These two prayed over the neophytes, and laid their hands upon them, whereupon the neophytes received the Holy Ghost. We also read in the Acts how Saint Paul baptized twelve men in the city of Ephesus, and then laid his hands upon them, and the Holy Ghost came upon them. The Apostles, could not have imparted the Holy Ghost to the Christians if they had not received the power to do so from Jesus Christ.

2. We know from many ancient accounts that the successors of the Apostles, the bishops, imparted the Holy Ghost to the faithful at the very beginning of the Church. Saint Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, who was martyred in 258, wrote: "Those who have been baptized, are presented to the bishops, who pray over them and lay their hands upon them. Their conversion is thus completed by the seal of faith." Saint Jerome says: "It is customary for the bishop to visit the churches in distant towns and, laying his hands on the neophytes, to invoke the Holy Ghost." Saint Augustine writes: "The Sacrament of Confirmation, among the visible signs, is just as holy as Baptism."

Thus there can be no doubt that the Catholic Church received the Sacrament of Confirmation from Jesus Christ Himself. This is further proved by the fact that those churches which fell away from the centre of unity centuries ago, e.g., the Greek Church, have retained Confirmation. If Confirmation had been introduced into the Catholic Church only after the rupture, the separated churches would never have accepted it.

3. From what has been said it follows that Confirmation is a Sacrament, that is, an outward sign which bestows grace upon the soul. The outward sign consists in the bishop laying his hand on the person to be confirmed, anointing him with the holy chrism, and saying at the same time: "I sign thee with the Sign of the Cross, and

I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation; in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

This rite has the following effects: The Holy Ghost enters the soul with the fulness of His graces and gifts, strengthens its supernatural life, and increases sanctifying grace. He provides us with strength to resist the threefold enemy who endeavours to snatch us from Jesus Christ. He gives us special strength to confess the faith and to live according to its dictates, regardless of what the world may say. Thus the Holy Ghost impresses a kind of seal on our souls, by which we are made soldiers of Christ. Saint Paul says: "[It is] God who also hath sealed us, and given us the pledge of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Corinthians 1:21-22). This seal can never be effaced from our souls; therefore we are bound to fight for Jesus Christ and always receive from the Holy Ghost special strength for this purpose. Hence it is not necessary to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation more than once; to attempt to do so would be a mortal sin and render the rite itself invalid.

4. Through Baptism we become Christians and the higher, supernatural life begins in us. But this life has not yet reached its full strength; we are still children, supernaturally speaking. The supernatural life in its perfection is breathed into our souls only at Confirmation; then we are, as it were, full-grown Christians, armed for the struggle of life. No one should defer the acquisition of this full life and strength.

What happens at Confirmation?

At Confirmation the Holy Ghost enters into us.

What does the Holy Ghost effect within us at Confirmation?

At Confirmation the Holy Ghost strengthens us, so that we may keep the faith and profess it resolutely; He makes us soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Effects of Confirmation

Father Judge, S.J., gives the following account of the special effects of Confirmation on his Indian neophytes in Alaska: "Ten grown-up

girls have returned home from the school of the Holy Cross Mission. They are a real credit to the Sisters, so great is the change effected in them by a few years at school. They speak English fluently, they have made their first Holy Communion, and have received Confirmation; they are very good and zealous girls. Immediately after their arrival it struck me that they professed their faith far more courageously and openly than the girls who had returned in previous years. The reason for this difference only now occurs to me, - they were the first to return who had received the Sacrament of Confirmation. It was only the winter previous that Father Tosi had been empowered by the Holy Father to administer this Sacrament. Never before had I realized its effects so clearly, and I sincerely thank the Holy Ghost for having revealed the power of His grace in these children, the first to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, to their own salvation as well as to the edification of all who see them."

How We Should Prepare Ourselves for Confirmation - How the Sacrament is Administered

1. The Apostles and disciples of Jesus spent the ten days between the Ascension and Pentecost in constant prayer, asking God to send them the Holy Ghost. Those who are to be confirmed should also spend time before the reception of the Sacrament asking for the Holy Ghost and His strength, especially by reciting the third glorious mystery of the Rosary and the following prayer: "Come, Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of Thy faithful," etc. They should also be particularly zealous in the performance of good works during the time that precedes Confirmation and guard themselves more carefully than ever against sin. He that desires to be confirmed should also be well instructed in the faith.

When receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation we should at least be free from mortal sin. For this reason we should receive the Sacrament of Penance before Confirmation. It is recommended to make a general confession on this occasion, in order thoroughly to put our house in order and to offer an entirely pure heart to the Holy Ghost. Before Confirmation it is customary to receive Holy Communion, in order to ask Jesus to send the Holy Ghost with His manifold graces into our souls. Directly before Confirmation we should excite ourselves to an act of contrition for our sins.

2. If possible, the confirmandus should be accompanied by a godfather or godmother. The godparents are in a sense responsible for the person to be confirmed, for his remaining true to his faith and professing it courageously. Therefore they are bound, if necessary, to see to it that he leads a good Christian life. As a sign that they undertake this duty, they lay the right hand on the right shoulder of the person to be confirmed, while the Sacrament is being administered.

Only Catholics may be godparents at Confirmation; moreover, they must be zealous, not lukewarm Catholics; they should be confirmed themselves and of mature age. The same person may not be sponsor

at Baptism and at Confirmation. The sponsor contracts a spiritual relationship with the god-child.

3. Confirmation is given in the following manner: The bishop stands before those to be confirmed, stretches his hands over them, and invokes the Holy Ghost. He then lays his hand | on the head of each and anoints him on the forehead with the | holy chrism in the form of a cross, saying: "I sign thee with the Sign of the Cross, and confirm thee with the chrism of salvation; in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." He then gives the person to be confirmed a gentle | stroke on the cheek with two fingers, saying: "Peace be with - you!" Finally the bishop again prays over those confirmed and gives them his blessing.

The holy chrism is composed of the oil of olives and balsam, which are mixed and consecrated by the bishop on Holy Thursday. The oil indicates that the grace of the Holy Ghost shall penetrate as easily as oil the souls of those to be confirmed. In ancient times the gladiators used to make their limbs. strong and pliable with oil. The person to be confirmed is to be strengthened by chrism for the spiritual combat. The balsam indicates that those to be confirmed shall be preserved from the corruption of sin and exhale a pleasing odour of virtue before God. The bishop anoints them on the forehead to signify that they shall profess their faith openly and fearlessly.

The words of the bishop, "I sign thee," etc., indicate that the bishop impresses on the soul of the *confirmandus* the seal of the crucified Saviour, that he consecrates him as a soldier of Christ, and imparts to him strength from the Holy Ghost.

The stroke on the cheek indicates that the person confirmed must be ready to suffer insult, persecution, nay, even death, rather than be unfaithful to Jesus. Through such fidelity and constancy he will obtain that interior peace which Jesus has promised to His followers (John 14:27).

4. After Confirmation the confirmed should return fervent thanks to the Holy Ghost for having come to him with His grace. He should also promise to remain faithful to his Saviour. He should spend the day in quiet recollection and prayer. We should all often recollect

what we have received in Confirmation and ask the Holy Ghost to renew this grace within us.

If the godparent desires to give a souvenir, it should be some such suitable one as a crucifix, a rosary, or an edifying book, e.g., a prayer book, a Catholic edition of the Gospels, or the life of some saint. Worldly gifts often have the effect of drawing the heart away from spiritual things and thus fostering vanity and covetousness.

What responsibility does the godparent at Confirmation undertake?

The godparent undertakes the responsibility of seeing that the person confirmed leads a Christian life.

Why We Should Profess Our Faith Courageously

Jesus has said: "He that shall confess me before men, I shall also confess him before my Father who is in Heaven" (Matthew 10:32). Our Divine Saviour expects those who are confirmed to profess their faith in Him by word and deed.

1. We have no reason to be ashamed of our Catholic faith; on the contrary, we have every reason to be proud of it; for our faith is certainly true. We have the most reliable proofs of this.

Jesus Christ showed by His holy life as well as by His miracles and prophecies that He spoke the truth. The Catholic Church was founded by Him and has His support and that of the Holy Ghost. Therefore we are certain that it teaches us the truth.

On the other hand, infidels do not feel certain in their unbelief. They can doubt and criticize, but they have nothing to take the place of faith. One of the most learned of these, Alexander von Humboldt (died 1859), wrote towards the end of his long life: "Life is sheer nonsense. If one has worked and studied for eighty years, one must in the end admit that one has accomplished nothing and discovered nothing. If only we knew, at least, why we are in this world!" Thus it is with infidels to the present day, notwithstanding all the progress made in science and technique.

Unbelief impresses us still less when we consider what are its chief causes. Some persons are infidels through pride, as were the high priests, scribes and Pharisees in the time of Christ; they do not want to submit to the Church or even to God; they would like to be gods themselves. Others refuse to believe because they are leading a sinful life. Jesus says: "Everyone that doth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reproved" (John 3:20). Others again will not believe because of indifference or ignorance. They are entirely taken up with worldly affairs; they do not trouble themselves about the things of Heaven and are ignorant of them.

Nor need we envy non-Catholic Christians, especially Protestants. For the greatest disunion and chaos reigns in their midst. Many of their best men and women have come over to the Catholic Church and felt exceedingly happy within its pale.

Therefore we have every reason to rejoice in our holy religion; only an ignorant Catholic can feel ashamed of his faith.

2. We have no reason, either, to fear to profess our faith. Infidels may ridicule us, but it is only the ignorant and rude who do this, and we can afford to ignore them. They will cease ridiculing us if they see that we are firm. Perhaps our position or income may suffer through our fidelity to the faith. But God is rich enough and generous enough to compensate us for our sacrifices. Jesus tells us: "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 5:10). And even if we should suffer death for our faith, this would be a great gain, for we should then be martyrs, enter Heaven at once, and receive a glorious reward. Jesus has promised: "He that shall lose his life for me, shall find it" (Matthew 10:39). Let us fear nothing, therefore, but be brave soldiers of Christ, like the holy Apostles and martyrs.

3. One of the most important means - especially for young people - of remaining constant in the faith, is to join some Catholic society. Those who stand alone are mostly exposed to the ridicule and hostility of the enemies of our faith. "Woe to him that is alone" (Ecclesiastes 4:10). If, on the other hand, we associate with noble-minded fellow-Catholics of firm character, we can smile at the efforts of our opponents to make us waver in our faith. More likely they will not even make the attempt. Catholic societies usually also provide their members with good reading, organize suitable lectures on religious questions, lead their members regularly to the communion railing, and induce them to help one another in every way. Very often a young person's temporal and eternal happiness depends on his or her joining a Catholic society early in life.

A Christian Heroine of Ancient Days

When there is question of fighting for Christ, the women may not lag behind. In the courageous profession of faith they have proved themselves equal to men, nay, often surpassed them. A famous

example in the early days was Saint Perpetua, a distinguished lady who lived in Carthage (Africa). When only twenty-two years old, she was cast into prison with other Christians because of her faith. At this time her father was still a pagan. When he heard that his daughter was in prison, he implored her to give up her religion, saying: "Have pity on my grey hairs! Do not expose me to shame. | In the name of your brothers, your mother, and your little child, I entreat you not to ruin us by your obstinacy! For who of us | will dare appear in public if you are condemned to death?" He | kissed his daughter's hands and even knelt at her feet. It was a hard struggle for Perpetua, for she loved her father and her family very much, and still more her own babe. But God was more to her than © these. She told her father: "Nothing will happen to me but what God wills; our fate lies in His hands." The poor father went away feeling very sad. On the following day all the accused persons confessed themselves Christians before their judges and were condemned to be thrown to the wild beasts. After her return to prison Perpetua had a vision. She saw herself in the amphitheatre where the Christians were usually thrown to the beasts. A huge crowd of spectators was present. She was attacked, not by animals, but by a pagan of frightful appearance. Suddenly she was transformed into a man and was anointed by angels. Then came a man who was so large that he towered over the whole amphitheatre. He was magnificently attired and bore a green branch, on which were golden apples. He commanded silence and spoke as follows: "If this pagan conquers her, he will kill her with the sword; but if she overcomes him, she will receive this branch." He then went away and Perpetua fought with the pagan. She was victorious and received the branch. From this vision Perpetua saw that she must fight against the wicked enemy if she would be victorious and receive the crown of victory. The anointing by the angels reminded her that she had been strengthened for the fight by the Sacrament of Confirmation. That she was transformed into a man was taken to indicate that through the power of the Holy Ghost women become as strong and courageous as men. A few days later they were taken to the amphitheatre. They were all radiant with joy. Perpetua rejoiced most of all. She entered the great open pit of the theatre singing. These Christians said to the Judge: "You judge us, but God will judge you." For this the judge ordered them to be scourged. Then wild beasts were let loose upon them.

Perpetua was placed in a net and thrown in front of a wild ox, which tossed her about and trampled upon her; finally she was killed with a dagger. Many pagans, seeing her heroic courage, believed in Jesus Christ. For over 1700 years Perpetua has worn the crown of victory in Heaven; for she died in the year 202 or 203. Her feast is commemorated on the 6th of March.

Spirit of Counsel! be our guide,
Teach us, by earthly struggles tried,
Our heavenly crown to win.
Spirit of Fortitude! Thy power
Be with us in temptation's hour,
To keep us pure from sin.

Courageous Women

During the Communist régime in Hungary (1919) many women courageously professed the Catholic faith. The following are examples of this:

When the Loreto nuns were about to be driven from Budapest, the women of the town marched to the convent and tried to prevent the red soldiers from entering. A woman of the proletariat had a child of seven years with her. When the soldiers advanced, she lifted up the child and held it in front of her, saying: "You must kill this child and me before you can kill the nuns, for they have fed and housed me and my child."

When the administrator of confiscated church property, Oscar Faber, visited a girls' school to examine the teaching there, he asked some questions in history. A girl of sixteen stood up and fearlessly recited a passage full of patriotism and faith in God. Faber became pale with rage, and when the girl had finished, said: "Comrade, do you know that I could have you hanged for this? What do you say?" The girl, who was the daughter of a prominent family, answered: "I know it. But I am not afraid of you. If you have me hanged, I shall pray in the next world for your conversion." The hardened, cruel man was affected by these words. Pale and stammering with excitement, he muttered to himself: "I have never met such a strong character among men," and left the school.

An Act of Faith

Firmly I believe and truly
God in three and God in one;
And I next acknowledge truly
Manhood taken by the Son.

And I trust and hope most fully
In that Manhood crucified;
And each thought and deed unruly
Do to death, as He has died.

Simply to His grace and wholly
Light and life and strength belong;
And I love supremely, solely,
Him the Holy, Him the Strong.

And I hold in veneration,
For the love of Him alone,
Holy Church, as His creation,
And her teachings, as His own.

Adoration aye be given
With and through the angelic host,
To the God of earth and heaven,
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

- *Cardinal Newman*

The Triumph of the Just on the Last Day

"Then shall the just stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted them, and taken away their labours. These seeing it, shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the suddenness of their unexpected salvation. Saying within themselves, repenting, and groaning for anguish of spirit: These are they, whom we had some time in derision, and for a parable of reproach. We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honour. Behold how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints. Therefore we have erred from the way of truth" (Wisdom 5:1-6).

Extreme Unction

1. Our souls are most in need of help and consolation in the time of dangerous illness, when death and eternity are near. Jesus who, during His life upon earth, showed particular charity towards the sick, has instituted a special Sacrament for them, - Extreme Unction. Saint James writes: "Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man: and the Lord shall raise him up: and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him" (James 5:14,15). This must have been decreed by Jesus Himself, otherwise the Apostle could not have promised that the sins of the sick would be forgiven through this rite. Hence Extreme Unction was instituted by Jesus Christ and is a true Sacrament. The Church has administered it as such from the time of the Apostles.

2. The *outward sign* of this Sacrament is the anointment of the sick with holy oil and the accompanying prayer of the priest.

The principal *effect* of Extreme Unction is the forgiveness of sins. Generally speaking, only venial sins are forgiven in this Sacrament. Mortal sins must be effaced by the Sacrament of Penance or at least by perfect contrition before receiving Extreme Unction. Yet if the sick person is unable either to confess his sins or to make an act of perfect contrition, his mortal sins can also be forgiven in Extreme Unction, provided he at least has imperfect contrition.

The sick person furthermore receives consolation and peace from this Sacrament, enabling him to bear his illness more patiently and to fear death less. He is also strengthened against the temptations of the evil one. "The Lord will raise up the sick," says the Apostle.

Finally, Extreme Unction often restores bodily health, especially when the Sacrament is received with great confidence and in good time, before death is imminent.

3. Extreme Unction was instituted by Jesus Christ for all who are seriously and dangerously ill, not merely for those actually dying.

When possible, this Sacrament should be received while fully conscious. If the patient has lost consciousness, the priest should be sent for without delay, for it is possible that Extreme Unction may save his soul from eternal damnation. But often the unconscious patient cannot be helped by this Sacrament because he is guilty of mortal sin, of which he has not repented and of which he is now no longer able to repent. But if he should recover consciousness after Extreme Unction has been administered, he should make an act of perfect contrition and if possible confess his sins.

Children who have attained the use of reason (about seven years) can and ought to receive Extreme Unction when they are dangerously ill.

If the danger of death has passed away, and then returns, Extreme Unction can and ought to be received again, especially if a fairly long period has elapsed since it was first received, say, three months or half a year.

Let us beg of our Divine Saviour to come to our aid in the hour of death by Extreme Unction! If we are dangerously ill, we should ask to receive this precious Sacrament without delay.

The Heavenly Physician

A priest of the Archdiocese of Vienna relates that he was present, apparently by chance, in 1913, when some doctors were holding a consultation over a factory-worker who was seriously ill. They told the man's wife that his condition was dangerous, in fact, hopeless. Being a Catholic, she wished to call a priest but was told the least excitement might cause instant death. The wife was overcome with grief. The priest wanted to anoint the sick man immediately, but she said: "Father, it is impossible. He would get very much excited if he saw you, for he was not at all pious and took no heed of the Church. I cannot allow a priest to visit him." The priest replied: "My good woman, it is true the doctors think there is scarcely any hope for your husband. But we know that there is a higher Power above all the doctors of the world, the Chief Physician, who is Lord over life and death. It may be that He holds a different opinion. He can help in the worst cases. Had we not better consult this Great Physician?" The woman consented, and the priest went in to the

sick man. He counselled him to invoke the Great Physician in Heaven and, contrary to his wife's expectation, and to her great joy, he declared himself ready. After an hour he had been given the Sacraments, and the Heavenly Physician healed his soul and also his body. He recovered his health completely. Two months later the priest received a postal card from Mariazell, telling him that the man was now cured and had gone with his wife to this place of pilgrimage to thank the Heavenly Physician for the favour.

How the Sacraments Are Administered to the Sick

The Church assists those who are dangerously ill by administering to them not only Extreme Unction, but also the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist. Thus he is prepared for death, should this occur.

1. If the priest is called to attend a sick person, there should be in the room a table covered with a white cloth and beside it, if possible, a pridieu on which the priest can kneel. On the table there should be a crucifix, two burning candles, a glass containing holy water, a small glass with ordinary water, a plate with six little balls of cotton, some salt, and a towel.

The patient should prepare himself by making an examination of conscience and an act of contrition. Complete fasting before Holy Communion is not required from those who are dangerously ill.

2. When the priest enters the room with the Blessed Sacrament, the attendants should kneel down and adore Jesus in the Sacred Host. The priest imparts the blessing with the Blessed Sacrament and then also kneels down. He now sprinkles holy water on the sick person, in order to ask God to give him true contrition. Then the attendants leave the room and the priest hears the sick man's confession. It is advisable for him to tell in this confession, what his relations towards God have been during his whole life. He should mention whether he has ever made an invalid confession without making atonement for it since. If he is unable to speak, he should confess his sins and manifest his contrition by striking his breast or by some other sign.

After the sick person has made his confession, the attendants should return to the room and kneel while the priest administers Holy Communion to the patient as "Viaticum."

If there is danger of death, the priest then administers Extreme Unction; that is, he anoints the patient on the organs of the five senses, the eyes, the ears, the nose, the mouth, the hands and feet

with the holy oils which were consecrated by the bishop on Holy Thursday. While he anoints him he says: "By this holy anointing and of His most tender mercy, may the Lord forgive thee whatever thou hast committed by thy sight, by thy hearing, by thy smell, by thy taste or by thy speech, by thy touch, by thy steps, or by sensual desires." The priest also recites several prayers for the recovery of the sick person. While receiving Extreme Unction the patient should elicit an act of confidence and resignation to the will of God. The priest indicates this before administering Extreme Unction, by holding the crucifix to the patient's lips to be kissed.

After administering Extreme Unction, the priest imparts to the patient the plenary indulgence for the hour of death. To gain this indulgence the patient must contritely receive his suffering and even death as a penance for his sins and confidently invoke the holy name of Jesus.

3. After the sick person has received the Holy Sacraments worthily, he can confidently go forward to meet death and the Last Judgment. He has been reconciled to God, His loving Saviour is with him, and accompanies him into eternity.

But no one should rely on being able to atone for a sinful life on his death bed. A great many Catholics die suddenly and, as a rule, only those who have led a Christian life are granted the grace worthily to receive the Sacraments at death.

4. Frequently the sick do not realize the danger of their condition and it becomes the duty of their relatives to exhort them to receive the last Sacraments. They should not refrain from fulfilling this duty through fear of exciting the sick person. For the reception of the Sacraments will rather serve to calm and console the patient. To fear that the patient will have to die if he receives the Sacraments is foolish. For the reception of the Holy Sacraments quite often marks the beginning of recovery. If the relatives do not know how to induce the patient to receive the Sacraments, it may be well to ask the priest to visit him first. The greatest benefit his relatives or friends can bestow upon a person who is dangerously ill is to see to it that he receives the Sacraments. In this way they may perhaps save him from hell.

5. We should also help the sick by reading to them, edifying books, such as the lives of the saints, and by reciting short prayers aloud in their presence. We should, however, not be too insistent in this. Above all, we should help them to make acts of faith, hope, charity, and contrition.

Which Sacraments should a Catholic receive when he is dangerously ill?

When he is dangerously ill, a Catholic should receive the Sacraments of Penance, the Holy Eucharist, and Extreme Unction.

Whose duty is it to see to it that the sick receive the last Sacraments?

Generally it is the duty of the relatives or friends of the sick to see to it that they receive the last Sacraments.

How should the sick prepare themselves for the reception of the last Sacraments?

The sick should prepare themselves for the reception of the last Sacraments by examining their conscience and by making acts of contrition, confidence in God, and resignation to His holy will.

Archduke Charles's Preparation for the Last Journey

Archduke Charles of Austria, who in 1809 defeated Napoleon (until then always victorious) at Aspern, while still in good health used frequently to request his confessor to let him know when death would be near. Often others know this better than the sick man himself. "Just say to me: Come, you old veteran, it is time to march!" In 1847 the Archduke had a sudden attack of pleurisy. He did not require to be warned by his confessor. He himself asked at once for the last Sacraments. He received them with the greatest devotion and went to meet his Master peacefully and confidently.

The Greatest Benefit Bestowed by a Physician

Baron von Sieberer, a great philanthropist, died in Innsbruck in

1914. During his lifetime he had spent nearly all his means - which were considerable - on orphans and the aged poor. Unfortunately he had lost his faith in early youth and could not be moved by the entreaties of his friends to return to God. When, with advancing years, his heart began to grow weaker, a Catholic doctor warned him of his serious condition and of the necessity of being prepared for death. The old man sent for a priest and received the last Sacraments with edifying devotion. On the day of his death he called the nurse to his bedside and requested her to give 200 kronen which he kept in an envelope in his desk to the doctor as a token of his gratitude for having told him that he was in danger of death.

The Happy Death of a Catholic Soldier

During the World War Father Raymond Dreiling, O.F.M., was called to the bedside of a Westphalian soldier whose leg had to be amputated. When he had received the Sacraments, the soldier said with a happy smile: "Now I do not mind the operation, for I am not afraid of death." He calmly dictated his last wishes to his father and mother, brothers and sisters, while the priest wrote them in his diary. The operation was successful, but it came too late, as blood poisoning had already set in. The poor man knew he had to die, but all that he said was: "I am content to die. I should not care to live longer if I were given the choice, for I am going to see God in Heaven." When Father Dreiling returned to him after an hour, he shook his head and said jocosely: "Death is a queer old fellow. I have gone so far on the road, and still he has not come. He might be a bit quicker. Wonder how long I still have to live?" The Sisters had brought him some flowers and the priest had given him a new rosary, as he had sent his own to his parents for a souvenir. The dying man had the rosary wound about his folded hands and held the flowers between his fingers. He said: "You must promise me, Father, that you will be present at my funeral tomorrow afternoon." "And will you, Sister, see to it, that the rosary and the flowers are in my hands after death just as they are now?" Tears were in the eyes of both priest and Sister, but the good man only said: "How glad I am that I am going to see our dear Lord! I will pray for our country. for my parents, brothers and sisters, and for you all."

A Sick Call in the Philippines

Father Verbrugge, a missionary in the Philippine Islands, writes: "Last Friday I was summoned to take the Holy Viaticum to a dying man. There was no need to ask the way. 'When the bell rings,' I was told, 'go to the church at once and fetch the Blessed Sacrament, and follow the children.' Sure enough, there were some two hundred children waiting for me when the call came. Scarcely had I started on the journey, when they began to say the rosary aloud. As we went through the streets of the village, the doors were flung open, and a crowd of women followed with lighted candles. Soon there were five hundred people following me. The house where the sick man lay was a mile and a half from the village. It was a poor thatched hut, not much better than the stable at Bethlehem; but about fifty yards of the path leading to it were covered with bamboo matting, the hut itself was draped in white, and near the sickbed was a little altar, decorated with flowers, pictures, and statues. According to the custom of that locality, all the neighbours had come to help, and each had contributed his share of the decoration. On the whole it was the simplest and most touching expression of faith in the Blessed Sacrament I ever saw."

A Royal Acolyte

In his "Little Book on the Inner Life" Father Rupert Wickl, S.J., relates the following story:

"Queen Maria of Bavaria (died 1889) had a great devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. She loved to visit the quiet little church in the Bavarian village of Elbingenalp during her stay at her summer residence there. One hot afternoon a school girl came running for the priest, saying that somebody was dying and wanted to receive the last Sacraments at once. The priest hastened to the church. There was no sacristan there, for all the people were working in the fields. So he placed the lantern and the little bell in the child's hands and took the Blessed Sacrament from the tabernacle. The Queen, who was praying in a corner, rose from her seat and, taking the lantern and the little bell from the child, went in front of the priest. They had to pass through fields and meadows. The people stared in wonder, then followed, and soon there was a large procession, Queen Maria leading with the lantern and the bell. Thus

the Queen of Bavaria acted as an acolyte.

Holy Orders

1. Jesus gave to His Apostles great power, especially the power to forgive sins and to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. He desired that this power should be retained in the Church and therefore commanded His Apostles to transmit it to others. The Apostles consecrated many bishops and transmitted their full power and authority to them. Others they ordained priests and gave them a large part of their power. (*Besides the Apostles, Jesus also sent out seventy-two disciples to preach the Gospel, but He did not give them as much authority as He gave to the Apostles.*) Others they made deacons and gave them a lesser part of their power. With the power, they imparted to them the grace to fulfil the duties of their office. Therefore Saint Paul writes to Timothy, whom he had consecrated bishop: "I admonish thee, that thou stir up the grace of God which is in thee by the imposition of my hands" (2 Timothy 1:6). Like the Apostles, their successors, the bishops, ordained bishops, priests, and deacons. This is the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

2. To become a priest it is necessary to have a special vocation from God. Saint Paul writes: "Neither doth any man take the honour to himself, but he that is called by God, as Aaron was" (Hebrews 5:4). Vocation is shown by a strong inclination and suitability for the priesthood and by the call of the bishop. The preparation for Holy Orders is long and laborious. First the candidate must spend years in study and the practice of piety. Then he receives minor orders, by which he is empowered to perform various offices in the service of God. Some time after this he is ordained subdeacon. The subdeacon assists the officiating priest at solemn High Mass. He is obliged to recite the Divine Office daily and to lead a celibate life. After some time the subdeacon is ordained deacon and empowered to preach and to administer Baptism and Holy Communion. Finally, the deacon is ordained a priest. Ordination to the priesthood is imparted in the following manner: The bishop during Holy Mass after many prayers and exhortations imposes his hands on the deacon, anoints his hands with holy oil, and hands him the chalice with wine and the paten with the host, that he may touch them, saying: "Receive the power to offer to God the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, for the living as well as for the dead." Finally, the bishop

again imposes his hands on the deacon, saying: "Receive the Holy Ghost: Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven; whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."

The priest is empowered to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and to administer the Sacraments. But he cannot ordain other priests and, as a rule, cannot administer the Sacrament of Confirmation.

3. Every Catholic belongs to one large pastoral district, called "diocese," and presided over by a bishop. He also belongs to a smaller district within the diocese, which is called parish. The priest who is in charge of the parish is called parish priest; if he has other priests to assist him, these are called curates, chaplains or vicars. Every Catholic is subject to his pastor and must go to him for the Sacraments of Baptism and Matrimony, for the attendance in sickness and a Christian burial. These acts are entered in the parish books or registers, from which certificates may be obtained upon request. A Catholic may assist at Mass on Sundays outside his own parish; he may also receive the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist outside his parish, But it is advisable to receive the Easter Communion in one's own parish church, and, as far as possible, to keep to one's own parish as a rule.

4. Priests are bound to devote themselves entirely to furthering the glory of God and the salvation of souls and, if necessary, must lay down their lives for these sacred causes. In order that they may be able to devote themselves entirely to their spiritual duties, the Church requires that they seat remain unmarried (celibacy).

The faithful should show respect and gratitude to the priests. Every Catholic is bound to obey the Pope, his bishop, his parish priest or his representative, his confessor or religious instructor in all spiritual matters. Jesus said to the Apostles and their successors: "He that heareth you, heareth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me" (Luke 10:16).

Priests are hated, slandered, and persecuted by wicked people. Faults committed by individual priests are put to the account of the whole clergy. Many priests have been unjustly imprisoned and even put to death. Jesus foretold all this when He said to His Apostles: "If

you had been of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. . . If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:19-20). But He also said: "Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for My sake. Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in Heaven" (Matthew 5:12).

What power have priests?

Priests have the power to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, to forgive sins, and to administer other Sacraments.

Priestly Heroism

The sacrifices made by priests for the salvation of souls can be yery clearly seen in the foreign missions, The missionaries leave their homes to win souls for Christ in distant parts of the world, often amid the greatest privations and dangers.

Such a missionary was the famous Father Damian Deveuster, a Belgian. He worked in the Hawaii or Sandwich Islands in the Pacific Ocean. In those islands there are many lepers. Leprosy is a disease which causes the living body to decay. One limb after another falls from the body. Worms feed on the poor lepers. They give forth an unbearable stench, and their breath infects the air. As leprosy is infectious, the government has the lepers conveyed to the island of Molokai, where they are isolated from the rest of mankind and from whence they may never depart. Father Damian heard how abandoned these lepers were and how in their despair they gave themselves up to drunkenness and other vices. A number of them were Catholics. From time to time a Catholic priest came to them. This was not enough, and Father Damian offered to go and stay with these poor people. The bishop gladly accepted his offer, and in 1873 Father Damian went and tookup his abode among the lepers. He was father and mother to them. He nursed them, provided for cleanliness, built churches and dwellings, founded an orphanage, and made coffins for the dead - 1500 in the course of years. He said Holy Mass and preached on Sundays, exhorted and comforted the sufferers, instructed the children, administered the Sacraments, and prayed constantly for his protegés. He felt so closely united to his

lepers that he used to say in his sermons: "We lepers." In this way he soon effected a complete change on the island. Piety, contentment, and joy entered into the hearts of the poor outcasts, their condition improved to an amazing extent, and the mortality rate decreased considerably.

In 1885 Father Damian was himself stricken with leprosy. He had expected it and was perfectly resigned to the will of God. He worked unceasingly as long as he could. In 1889 he died. The brother who nursed him writes: "I have never seen a happier death. He suffered and prayed in continual communion with God and repeatedly assured me that he was very happy because he would be able to celebrate Easter in Heaven." It was a great consolation for Father Damian that his work had been taken up by another priest and that three nuns also had set out for Molokai to nurse the lepers. His lepers showed the most touching devotion to him during his illness and after his death his fame spread throughout the world.

The World War also brought forth many glorious examples of sacrifice made by priests.

At the beginning of the War, Dr. Rudolf Hittmair, Bishop of Linz, inspired by heroic charity, went to the hospital of the Brothers of Mercy in that town, to nurse the sick and wounded soldiers. Day and night he cared for them like an ordinary nursing brother, with a tenderness that love alone can inspire. His charity also moved him to minister to the enemy. On February 10th, 1915, he visited the camp of the Serbian prisoners in Mauthausen near Linz. Here he probably contracted the germs of a fever, which developed on February 26th. His body, weakened by the strenuous work in the hospital, quickly succumbed to a treacherous disease. On the 5th of March this noble shepherd breathed his last, a true victim to charity.

One of the finest acts of heroism in the World War was the defence made at Col di Lana on the southeast border of Tyrol. For months the imperial archers suffered the most terrible attacks from the Italian armies. Their pastor, Dr. Anselm Blumenschein, O.S.B., of Kremsmiinster Abbey in Upper Austria, had been sent to Col di Lana point at his own urgent request. When, shortly before Easter, 1916, the attacks of the enemy became more furious, Dr. Blumenschein

remained day and night at the points that were threatened most, although he would have done his duty by staying at the post from which the relieving guard departed every fortyeight hours. Again and again he passed over the path leading from the Sief peak to the Col di Lana peak, from which he might fall at any moment, right or left, down the precipitous rocks which were almost continually under the fire of the enemy. He was received up there as an angel from Heaven, the people crowding round him like children; strong men who had never been overcome by an enemy, wept for joy. The priest remained with them twentyfour hours or longer, encouraging and comforting them, and giving absolution to those who had to face death at any moment. On the 17th of April the Col di Lana peak stood for hours under such a hot fire that the trenches were levelled and the station reduced to ruins. That evening Dr. Blumenschein asked the commandant of the battalion to allow him to ascend the summit. As all the roads were under continual fire, his request was refused; the commandant wanted to spare the priest's life. As the distress grew greater and the trenches were full of wounded and dying soldiers, the captain of the company stationed on the Col di Lana peak telephoned for Dr. Blumenschein. Reluctantly the commandant imparted the message to the courageous priest, who eagerly and gladly set out on the perilous journey. Scarcely had he reached the summit, when he was killed by an enemy shell. The Italian soldiers found him lying with arms folded on his breast.

On the 25th of January, 1918, there was a terrible accident on the Ratisbon-Munich railway line, near Schleissheim station, a short distance from Munich. A case of carbon disulphide exploded in a third-class coach of an express train. In a moment the carriage, which was full of passengers, burst into flames. Father William Weber, a military chaplain from Landshut, who was sitting near the door, was able to escape. But when he had left the carriage, he heard cries for help from within, where men and women were struggling against death. He gave no more thought to his own life, but entered the carriage repeatedly to help in rescuing the passengers and to give absolution to the dying. He was himself badly wounded when he heard a cry for help from a soldier who had become fastened to the coach by his luggage and could not extricate himself. Enveloped in flames, the poor man cried out:

"Help, for God's sake! I have seven children!" Father Weber once more entered the coach, which was filled with flames and poison gas. He saved the man's life, but was burned terribly on the hands and face and inhaled so much poison gas that he died after seven days of agony in a clinic at Munich. To his venerable old mother, who was with him when he died, he said, "I am ready."

Marriage and How It Should Be Solemnized

1. God instituted the Sacrament of Matrimony in Paradise when he joined Adam and Eve together in an inseparable union, with the command: "Increase and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). In course of time marriage degenerated. But Jesus restored it to its pristine sanctity. He said: *"What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder"* (Matthew 19:6). *"Everyone that putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery; and he that marrieth her that is put away from her husband, committeth adultery"* (Luke 16:18).

The indissolubility of marriage is clearly expressed in these words; the bond of marriage, once made, continues until either the husband or the wife dies. These words also express the unity of marriage, that is to say, that a man can only have one wife and the wife only one husband. Jesus made marriage insoluble in order to secure the happiness of the married and their children; because a husband and wife can only have the right love for each other when they take each other for life. According to the will of Christ, marriage should be a symbol of His tender, indissoluble union with the Church (Ephesians 5:22-33). Moreover, the upbringing and the happiness of the children can only be secured by the parents living together during their whole lifetime. It is similar with regard to the unity of marriage. The Catholic Church can not and will not deviate from these commandments of Christ.

It is true there are exceptional cases in which urgent reasons require that a husband and wife should separate and live apart from each other. The Church permits this; but the marriage bond remains and neither party may marry again during the lifetime of the other. Jesus Christ expressly says: "Every one that putteth away his wife and marrieth another, committeth adultery; and he that marrieth her that is put away from her husband, committeth adultery." Therefore Saint Paul writes: "To them that are married, not I but the Lord commandeth, that the wife depart not from her husband [that is, of her own free will, without the permission of the ecclesiastical authorities]; and if she depart, that she remain unmarried, or be

reconciled to her husband. And let not the husband put away his wife" (1 Corinthians 7:10-11).

2. The married assume serious duties: mutual love, care and fidelity until death, providing for and upbringing of the children. God desires to give parents a special grace for the fulfilment of these duties, and for this reason Jesus has raised marriage to the dignity of a Sacrament. When Christians contract marriage, they receive a Sacrament and have a claim on God's special help. The Church has received this doctrine from the Apostles.

Jesus gave all the Sacraments to the Church, and hence also the Sacrament of Matrimony. Therefore it is for the Church to decide under what conditions a marriage is valid, and how it should be contracted. The material side of marriage (for example, the property of both parties) is subject to regulation by the State.

3. A promise of marriage or engagement, if it is to be acknowledged by the Church, must be set down in writing and signed by both parties and the parish priest, or two witnesses. Engagements should be entered into only at a mature age and if there is a certain prospect of early marriage. Those who intend to marry should first consider before God, whether they are called to the married state and whom they should choose as their partner in life. In this they should not be guided by their passions, but should keep before their minds the high aim of marriage, that is, to bring souls into the Church and to Heaven. They should look to the salvation of their own souls, pray fervently for light and grace, and ask the advice of parents or guardians. The time of engagement should be spent in a decorous and Christian manner. Those who are engaged should avoid being alone together and should permit no sinful familiarities. A sinful engagement is often followed by an unhappy marriage.

4. Some time before the marriage the engaged pair should announce their intention to their parish priest, bringing with them the necessary documents - baptismal certificate, information regarding their habitat, and, in cases of a previous marriage, the marriage certificate and the death certificate of the deceased partner. It would be a grievous sin of disloyalty towards the Church if a Catholic applied to a non-Catholic minister to be married. The parish priest sees whether there is any canonical obstacle to the

proposed marriage and gives the bridal pair instructions about the duties of the married state. The banns are read three times at a public service in church in order to discover any obstacles that may exist. Before the marriage ceremony the engaged couple should receive the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist in order that they may be united to Jesus and receive His blessing in their new state. They should also be confirmed.

The marriage must take place in the presence of the parish priest or his representative, and of two witnesses. The couple declare, before the priest, that they take each other in marriage und that they mean to remain faithful to each other until they re parted in death. As soon as they have made this declaration, the marriage is contracted. Then they clasp each other's ight hand and exchange rings in token of their vow to remain faithful to each other. The priest places his stole around their joined hands and blesses the bond with the Sign of the Cross If Catholics are married before a civil magistrate, instead of by the parish priest, the marriage is not valid in the eyes of God and the Church and they sin grievously if they live together a man and wife.

Christian marriage is the foundation of happiness and order in family and state. If the marriage laws prescribed by the Catholic Church were disregarded, chaos and misery would bi the result.

Can a valid marriage be dissolved?

A valid marriage can be dissolved only by death.

Marriage and Family Life among Pagans

The benefit conferred on mankind by Jesus Christ through His regulation of marriage can best be seen by taking a glance a the marriage and family relationships that exist among pagan nations.

These relationships are satisfactory only among a few small pagan tribes, which have preserved their primitive customs. These are the so-called Pygmy peoples of Central Africa, the natives of the Andaman Islands between Near and Farther India several South Australian races, and a few others, who still possess their original faith in one God and, morally speaking, stand highest among pagan

peoples. They have preserved monogamous marriage, which is dissolved only by death, while the great majority of heathen nations, in spite of their progress in civilization an economic matters, have greatly degenerated in religion and morality. The women especially have sunk to the level of slaves.

Among pagan peoples (with the exception of the above mentioned primitive races) men regard it as their right to have several wives. For the most part only the wealthy and powerful can afford this; but in Africa polygamy is wide-spread even among the common people. Among almost all pagan nations the husband can put away his wife whenever he chooses to do so. In many cases, if h wants to get rid of her, he sells her as though she were a head o cattle. Among savage nations it often happens that the husband kills his wife with impunity if she displeases him.

Missionaries from Uganda in Central Africa relate that one day the Katikiro (king's minister) ordered that one of his wives should have her ears and lips cut off and then be driven away because she had gone without permission to visit her father, who lived a mile away. Father Lourbel witnessed a still more frightful incident. He was waiting with a crowd of Baganda (inhabitants of Uganda) in the ante-chamber of the King's residence for the royal reception to begin. Suddenly the doors of the adjoining room flew open, and one of the wives of Mtesa, the King, was dragged out by the feet. The tyrant had condemned her to have her ears, lips, nose, and finally her head, cut off because she had spoken in too loud a voice before the reception began. The sentence was carried out without the missionary being able to prevent it.

A happy family life is impossible where such relations exist between husband and wife. As the wife is despised and enslaved, so it is also with the daughters. The sons grow accustomed to the brutal ways of their fathers, and even before they are of age lord it over their mothers and sisters.

The following are a few instances showing the marriage relations among the more cultured pagans, especially in China, Japan, and India. In China the marriage is arranged by the parents of the bride and the groom. Often the latter have never seen each other until they meet for the marriage ceremony. In many localities the girl is

sold to the bridegroom's parents. If the husband does not like his wife, he may sell her to somebody else.

A traveller relates the following about the Japanese, apparently without having any idea of the atrocity implied by the story: "Marriages between Europeans and Japanese girls are in most cases only temporary. Two or three visits to a family are considered sufficient before an offer of marriage is made for one or other of the daughters. The proposal is announced by a mediator either to the grandmother or to the oldest female member of the family. This is followed by a family council, at which the matter is considered, the decision being conveyed to the young man by the mediator. Usually the condition imposed by the father is the payment of 100 to 300 dollars on the day the contract is made, while the mother demands the payment of a monthly sum of 20 dollars for the young wife. Without further ceremony the girl goes to her new home and holds her position as wife there as long as it pleases her master. After the separation, which often occurs a few months later, the Japanese girl returns to the house of her parents without having suffered the least damage to her reputation. Usually she has saved a few hundred dollars, which remain her property, until one day a Japanese youth presents himself and makes a more serious proposal to the grandmother for the hand of her granddaughter." (G. Kreitner, *Im fernen Osten*, Vienna, 1881, page 235)

In India a girl is "married" at the age of three to six, usually to a much older boy. After the wedding she remains in the house of her parents until she has reached the requisite age and is demanded by the father of the bridegroom. The girl is bound, but the bridegroom (or rather his father) can dissolve the "marriage." Further, after the young wife has entered the house of her husband, she may be sent home at any time for any or no reason. Among the higher castes a terrible custom once prevailed according to which, on the death of the husband, his widow was burned with the body of the husband. This custom has been abandoned under British rule. But the law is still enforced by which the widow may not marry again, even when she is extremely young. She is deprived of the adornment of her hair and must wear mourning until her death; thus she leads a joyless life full of misery and moral danger.

The Christian religion alone has upheld the sanctity of marriage and thus ensured happiness to the family. Christianity alone has given to woman her full dignity by declaring her to be the equal of her husband as a human being and a temple of God and by granting her the same rights as her husband - apart from the obedience due to the husband as head of the house. The Christian religion gives the commandment: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church and delivered himself up to it" (Ephesians 5:25). But when the Christian religion is given up, the dignity of womanhood sinks back into the mire. The woman becomes degraded to the level of a tool for her husband's self-indulgence.

How England Came to Be Separated from the Catholic Church

The fidelity with which the Catholic Church upholds the indissolubility of marriage as it was instituted by Jesus Christ is shown by the following instance: King Henry VIII of England (1509-1547) was married to Catherine of Aragon. After he had lived with her seventeen years, he wished to marry her maid of honour, Anne Boleyn. Therefore he asked the Pope to declare his marriage with Catherine invalid. The Pope could not do this because the marriage had been contracted with perfect validity. The King threatened to break away with his whole country from the Church. But the Pope remained faithful to his duty. As a result the King did break away from the Holy See and declared himself to be the head of the Church in England. His subjects had to take an oath acknowledging him to be head of the Church. Many Catholics who refused to take this oath were cruelly put to death, hanged or quartered; among these were six hundred priests and bishops. Thus originated the so-called Anglican (that is, English) Church.

The King took Anne Boleyn as his wife, but had her executed later on, and took a third wife. After the latter's death he took a fourth, whom he divorced. He then took a fifth, whom afterwards he had executed. Finally he took a sixth wife. Thus, even in those days it was manifest that marriage no longer possessed security when the commandments of Jesus Christ and of the Church were so flagrantly disregarded by the rulers of nations.

Forbidden Marriages - Marriage Impediments - Mixed Marriages

1. The Church has made certain laws governing marriage. For example, she has decreed that any person who has taken the vow of chastity may not marry, and that Catholics may not marry non-Catholics. Any person who contracts such a marriage commits a sin.

The Church has also established certain marriage impediments; when these are present, no valid marriage can take place. Thus no valid marriage can take place between blood relatives to the third degree (as far as the grandchildren of brothers and sisters) nor between those related by marriage to the second degree (the children of sisters and brothers). The husband is related by marriage to the relatives of his wife, and the wife to the relatives of her husband. Further, any person who has baptised someone in case of necessity, may not marry the latter; nor may a godparent marry his godchild. Priests and religious who have taken the vow af chastity may not marry. Christians may not marry non-Christians.

The Church has set up these impediments to marriage solely with a view to ensure the happiness of her children and, in general, the salvation of souls. But when there are important reasons for deviating from some of her regulations in certain cases, she grants a "dispensation." (No one can dispense from the impediment to marriage that lies in the unity and indissolubility of a marriage already contracted, because this impediment was established by Jesus Christ Himself.)

2. Of special importance is the law which forbids marriages between Catholics and non-Catholics, or so-called mixed marriages. The Church forbids such marriages because, as a rule, they expose the souls of the Catholic party and of the children to great danger. Catholics married to non-Catholics generally become estranged from the Church and often fall away entirely. Sometimes they must agree to allow their children to be brought up in a false religion. Unfortunately they often consent to have at least some of their children brought up in a different religion. The promise made by

the non-Catholic parent is but too frequently disregarded.

As a rule that unity which is a fundamental condition of happiness does not exist in mixed marriages. Husband and wife are at variance in the most important matter of religion. Usually they are also at variance in their conception of marriage, since the Catholic party regards marriage as indissoluble, whereas the Protestant party holds that divorce is permissible.

The Church permits mixed marriages in certain cases, but very unwillingly, and only to prevent greater evils. But in no case does she permit the marriage ceremony to be performed by a clergyman of a different church, because that would imply contempt of the Catholic faith. Any person who is guilty of such contempt is excommunicated, that is to say, so long as he has not done penance, he may not receive the Sacraments and has no share in the fruits of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass or in the prayers of the Church, nor any claim to a Christian burial. He is, however, still bound by the commandments of the Church.

Since a mixed marriage involves such grave dangers, Catholics should avoid making an acquaintance that might lead to such a union. They should also avoid persons who profess no religion or those who belong to Masonic or similar forbidden societies. Whenever there is question of entering on marriage or an acquaintanceship that may lead to marriage, we must more than ever keep before our minds the words of the Saviour: "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Matthew 16:26).

What is a mixed marriage?

A mixed marriage is a marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic.

Why does the Catholic Church forbid mixed marriages?

The Catholic Church forbids mixed marriages because they endanger the salvation of the Catholic party and of the children.

Courageous Obedience to the Church's Command

In Osaka (Japan) there lived a Christian family who possessed more treasures in Heaven than in this world. The father, Andrew Trakeda, was employed as joiner on a small merchantship. He hardly earned enough to enable him to procure the necessary clothes and the daily portion of rice for his children. The eldest daughter, a girl of twenty years, was a model Christian. A pagan master mechanic of the marine desired to marry her, notwithstanding her poverty. This marriage would have brought distinction and material advantages to the poor family. But the Christian father, to whom religion meant more than material prosperity, demanded that the suitor fulfill the conditions which the Church demands for a mixed marriage. The pagan, who appeared to be an honest man, promised to allow all the children to be baptized and brought up Christians and never to hinder his wife or children in the practice of the Catholic religion. The wedding was arranged and the betrothal was celebrated according to the custom of the country. As a pledge of his compact the bridegroom had offered the father the usual gifts and these had been accepted.

While they were awaiting a favourable day for the wedding, the suitor allowed himself to be persuaded by pagan relatives and friends to retract his promise. As the betrothal was sealed by the gifts, he hoped to be able to force poor Andrew to give his consent nevertheless. But the latter declared: "If the children are not to be baptized and brought up Catholics, I will never allow my daughter to become your wife." This drew down a storm of rage on the poor man and his daughter. But neither the taunts nor the ridicule of the pagan's relatives, nor his own threats, were able to move the Christian father to sell his soul and that of his child. His daughter returned the gifts and broke off the engagement. Contempt on the part of his own relatives, hatred and persecution on the part of the pagan suitor were the results of this courageous act. The family fell into dire straits. But when their distress was greatest, God's help was nearest. A wealthy Christian doctor, whose attention was attracted by the attack made on the brave Christian and his daughter, asked the girl to marry him, and soon they were a happy pair.

Ecclesiastical Blessings

1. When Jesus was on earth, He used to bless persons and things. He blessed children, that is, he expressed the wish that all should go well with them. He blessed bread and fishes, that is, he desired they might benefit those who ate them. Before His Ascension into Heaven He lifted up His hands and blessed His Apostles and disciples.

After the example given by their Master, bishops and priests also bless persons and objects in the name of the Church. At the conclusion of Holy Mass the priest blesses the faithful, that is, he asks God to give them His grace and prosper them in body and soul. When a mother enters the house of God for the first time after child-birth she receives a special blessing for herself and her child. The priest asks God to grant both mother and child good health and to lead them to eternal salvation. There is a special blessing also for the sick. The priest can bless food that it may benefit the faithful. He blesses houses that God may protect them and those who dwell in them. Schools and other institutions are especially blessed.

At every blessing the priest makes the Sign of the Cross, because it was on the Cross that Jesus Christ merited all graces and blessings for us. In church and at processions the blessing is sometimes given with the Blessed Sacrament, the priest turning towards the people and forming the Sign of the Cross over them with the monstrance or ciborium.

The priest blesses in the name of the Church. This gives a special power to his blessing. But others also can and should bless. Thus parents can and should bless their children, for example, at night or when the latter are leaving home. Holy Scripture says: "The father's blessing establisheth the houses of the children" (Ecclesiasticus 3:11), that is, it prospers their undertakings and efforts.

Each one can also bless himself with the Sign of the Cross and thereby receive many blessings from God, such as protection against the temptations of the devil. The Sign of the Cross should be made especially in the morning and evening, before and after prayer or

work, in danger and temptation.

2. Certain blessings are given to objects which are destined to be used in the service of God or for some other pious purpose. Such a blessing is sometimes called a "consecration."

When a church is consecrated, God is asked to take possession of the building, to dwell therein, and to hear the petitions offered up to Him here. Cemeteries, or at least the individual graves, are blessed. On the feast of Candlemas candles are blessed; on Ash Wednesday, ashes; on Palm Sunday, palm branches. At these blessings the priest begs God to inspire with holy thoughts those who receive on their foreheads the holy ashes and those who use the blessed candles or the blessed palm, and also to bless the dwellings in which such candles are lighted or palms kept. The priest blesses water and prays God to protect those who sprinkle themselves or their dwellings with it from the snares of the devil and to give them peace and salvation. Crucifixes, rosaries, religious pictures, and medals are blessed for a similar purpose.

Blessed objects should be treated reverently. We should have confidence that God will be merciful to us because of the prayer of the Church, if we use these objects devoutly. But we must not expect an unfailing effect from the use of such objects and employ them for no other purpose than that for which they are blessed. Blessed objects may not be sold.

Pious Christians sprinkle themselves with holy water every morning and evening, on entering and leaving a church, and so forth. Usually the Sign of the Holy Cross is made at the same time. Persons or objects that are blessed are usually sprinkled with holy water at the conclusion of the blessing.

Jesus by His Passion and death merited infinite blessings for us, and confided these blessings to His Church. The Church imparts them to the faithful. Let us reap the fruits when we can.

The Blessing of Saint Blase

Saint Blase lived at the time of the Great Persecutions (died 320). He was a bishop in Cappadocia and was cast into prison by the

governor. As he was a holy man, the sick came to him in prison to be cured. Many were actually cured by his prayers. Among them was a boy who had a fish-bone in his throat and was almost choked. His mother brought two candles as an offering. Saint Blase held the two candles in the form of a cross to the boy's neck and he was immediately relieved. To the present day, on the feast of Saint Blase, February 2d, the priest holds two blessed candles, tied together in the form of a cross, to the necks of the faithful and asks God, through the intercession of Saint Blase, to protect the faithful from diseases of the throat and other evils.

The Medal of the Immaculate Conception

In 1830 the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared twice to an humble Sister of Mercy in Paris. Our Lady was standing on a sphere (the earth), her feet crushing the serpent, and from her hands came bright rays (symbol of graces), which she sent upon the earth. The whole apparition was enframed by the words: "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee!" The Blessed Virgin commanded the Sister to have medals made similar to the apparition and promised great graces to those who would wear such a medal when blessed. It was only after two years that the Sister's spiritual superior decided to have the medals made, having first obtained the permission of the archbishop of Paris. A great many of the faithful asked for and obtained these medals. Many striking instances of heavenly favour showed that the apparition had been genuine. To the present day there are many instances of obstinate sinners being converted suddenly after they had consented to wear the "Miraculous Medal"; there have even been cases in which sinners were converted after pious friends had secretly brought the medal near them. The most famous among these conversions was that of Alphonse Ratisbonne, the son of a wealthy Jewish banker in Strasbourg. He was first a lawyer and afterwards entered the banking business of his uncle. He was engaged to be married and wanted to make another journey to the Orient before his marriage. Contrary to his original intention, he also visited Rome. Seeing so many Catholic sanctuaries in that city only increased his prejudice and hatred against the Catholic religion. During a visit he made to Baron de Bussiéres, a pious Catholic, the conversation turned on the subject of religion. Ratisbonne said he was born a Jew and would

die a Jew. The Baron made the following proposal: "Since you are so strong-minded and so sure of yourself, promise me you will wear what I give you." "What is it?" Ratisbonne asked. "This medal, nothing more." It was the "Miraculous Medal" of the Immaculate Conception. Ratisbonne laughed, but promised to wear it, agreeing even to say every day the prayer of Saint Bernard: "Remember, O Most Gracious Virgin Mary," etc. He looked upon this as an interesting event which he could relate afterwards for the amusement of his friends. Meanwhile the Baron, his family, and a friend of theirs, Count Laferronays, prayed fervently for his conversion. Not long after, January 20th, 1842, Ratisbonne went with de Bussiéres to the Church of Saint Andrew. Count Laferronays had died suddenly, and Bussiéres had to make arrangements for the funeral. Meantime Ratisbonne waited in the church. Suddenly he saw the whole church vanish and in its place appeared a chapel filled with light. In the midst of this brightness the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared above the altar, large, radiant, full of sweetness and majesty, in the same form as she was depicted on the medal he wore. Ratisbonne was drawn to her by an irresistible power. She made a sign for him to kneel down. He did so and in a flash all the truths of the Catholic religion were revealed to him. When Baron de Bussiéres returned, he found the young Israelite on his knees, bathed in tears, scarcely 'able to utter a word, but kissing the medal he wore round his neck. Soon afterwards Alphonse was baptized. He renounced everything that had been dear to him hitherto, including his fiancée, became a priest, settled in Jerusalem, and devoted himself entirely to the conversion of his former coreligionists. For this purpose he built a large monastery with an orphanage and a school. He died in the Holy Land in 1884.

About This EBook

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The cover image is a detail of the triptych illustrating the sacraments, oil on panel, c.1447; this detail shows Baptism, Confirmation and Confession. It is housed in the Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten (Royal Mureum of Fine Arts) in Antwerp, Belgium, and the image swiped from Wikimedia Commons.

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